CARMEN ARIZA

GOLDEN (50th) EDITION

BY CHARLES FRANCIS STOCKING, E.M.

In the name of the Church he would serve these humble people.
—Book 2, Page 77.

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CHARLES FRANCIS STOCKING, E. M.
Author of THE DIARY OF JEAN EVARTS, THOU ISRAEL,
MODERN PARABLES, HERE, Etc.

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GOLDEN (50TH) EDITION

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CARMEN ARIZA

BOOK 1

DOTH this offend you?—the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

—*Jesus.*

CARMEN ARIZA

CHAPTER 1

THE tropical sun mounted the rim of the golden Caribbean, quivered for a moment like a fledgeling preening its wings for flight, then launched forth boldly into the vault of heaven, shattering the lowering vapors of night into a myriad fleecy clouds of every form and color, and driving them before it into the abysmal blue above. Leaping the sullen walls of old Cartagena, the morning beams began to glow in roseate hues on the red-tiled roofs of this ancient metropolis of New Granada, and glance in shafts of fire from her glittering domes and towers. Swiftly they climbed the moss-grown sides of church and convent, and glided over the dull white walls of prison and monastery alike. Pouring through half-turned shutters, they plashed upon floors in floods of gold. Tapping noiselessly on closed portals, they seemed to bid tardy sleepers arise, lest the hurrying midday *siesta* overtake them with tasks unfinished. The dormitory of the ecclesiastical college, just within the east wall of the city, glowed brilliantly in the clear light which it was reflecting to the mirror of waters without. Its huge bulk had caught the first rays of the rising sun, most of which had rebounded from its drab, incrusted walls and sped out again over the dancing sea. A few, however, escaped reflection by stealing through the slanting shutters of a window close under the roof of the building. Within, they fell upon a man kneeling on the tiled floor beside a rude cot bed.

In appearance the man was not more than twenty-five years of age. His black, close-curling hair, oval face, and skin of deep olive tint indicated a Latin origin. His clerical garb proclaimed him a son of the Church. The room was a small, whitewashed cell of stone, musty with the dampness which had swept in from the sea during the night. It was furnished with Spartan simplicity. Neither image, crucifix, nor painting adorned its walls—the occupant's dress alone suggested his calling. A hanging shelf held a few books, all evidently used

as texts in the adjoining college. A table, much littered; a wooden dressing stand, with a small mirror; and an old-fashioned, hair-cloth trunk, bearing numerous foreign labels, eked out the paucity of furnishings.

If the man prayed, there was only his reverent attitude to indicate it, for no words escaped his lips. But the frequent straining of his tense body, and the fierce clenching of his thin hands, as he threw his arms out over the unopened bed, were abundant evidence of a soul tugging violently at its moorings. His was the attitude of one who has ceased to inveigh against fate, who kneels dumbly before the cup of Destiny, knowing that it must be drained.

With the break of day the bells awoke in the church towers throughout the old city, and began to peal forth their noisy reminder of the virility of the Holy Catholic faith. Then the man raised his head, seemingly startled into awareness of his material environment. For a few moments he listened confusedly to the insistent clatter—but he made no sign of the cross, nor did his head bend with the weight of a hollow *Ave* on his bloodless lips while the clamoring muezzins filled the warm, tropical air with their jangling appeal. Rising with an air of weary indifference, he slowly crossed the room and threw wide the shutters of the solitary window, admitting a torrent of sunlight. As he did this, the door of the cell softly opened, and a young novitiate entered.

"With your permission, Padre," said the boy, bowing low. "His Grace summons you to the Cathedral."

The man made a languid gesture of dismissal, and turned from the lad to the rare view which greeted him through the open window. The dusty road below was beginning to manifest the city's awakening. Barefooted, brown-skinned women, scantily clad in cheap calico gowns, were swinging along with shallow baskets under their arms to the *plaza* for the day's marketing. Some carried naked babes astride their hips; some smoked long, slender cigars of their own rolling. Half-clad children of all ages, mixtures of *mestizo*, Spaniard, and Jamaican negro, trotted along beside them; and at intervals a blustering *cochero* rattled around the corner in a rickety, obsolete type of trap behind a brace of emaciated horses.

The lively gossip of the passing groups preluded the noisy chaffering to follow their arrival at the market place.

"Caramba, little pig!" shrilled a buxom matron, snatching her naked offspring away from a passing vehicle. "Think you I have money to waste on Masses for your naughty soul?"

"Na, señora," bantered another, "it will cost less now than later to get him out of purgatory."

"But, *comadre,* do you stop at the Cathedral to say a *Paternoster?*"

"To be sure, *amiga,* and an *Ave,* too. And let us return by way of the Hotel España, for, *quien sabe?* we may catch a glimpse of the famous *matador.*"

"Señor Varilla?"

"Yes. He arrived from Barranquilla last night—so my Pedro tells me—and will fight in the *arena* this Sunday. I have saved fifty *pesos* to see him. *Madre de Dios!* but I would sell my soul to see him slay but a single bull. And do you go?"

"God willing!"

The soft air, tempered by the languid ocean breeze, bore aloft the laughter and friendly bantering of the marketers, mingled with the awakening street sounds and the morning greetings which issued from opening doors and windows. The scent of roses and the heavier sweetness of orchids and tropical blooms drifted over the ancient city from its innumerable *patios* and public gardens. The age-incrusted buildings fused in the mounting sun into squares of dazzling white, over which the tiled roofs flowed in cinctures of crimson. Far off at sea the smoke of an approaching vessel wove fantastic designs against the tinted sky. Behind the city the convent of Santa Candelaria, crowning the hill of La Popa, glowed like a diamond; and stretching far to the south, and merging at the foot of the *Cordilleras* into the gloom-shrouded, menacing jungle, the steaming *llanos* offered fleeting glimpses of their rich emerald color as the morning breeze stirred the heavy clouds of vapor which hung sullenly above them.

To all this the man, looking vacantly out across the city walls to where the sea birds dipped on the rippling waves, was apparently oblivious. Nor did he manifest the slightest interest in the animated scene before him until a tall, heavy-set young priest emerged from the entrance of the dormitory below and stopped for a moment in the middle of the road to bask in the brilliant sunlight and fill his lungs with the invigorating ocean breeze. Turning his eyes suddenly upward, the latter caught sight of the man at the window.

"Ah, *amigo* José!" he called in friendly greeting, his handsome face aglow with a cordial smile. "Our good Saint Claver has not lobbied for us in vain! We shall yet have a good day for the bulls, no?"

"An excellent one, I think, Wenceslas," quickly replied the man addressed, who then turned abruptly away as if he wished to avoid further conversation. The priest below regarded the empty window for a moment. Then, with a short, dry laugh and a cynical shrug of his broad shoulders, he passed on.

As the man above turned back into the room his face, wearing the look of one far gone in despair, was contorted with passion. Fear, confusion, and undefined soul-longing seemed to move rapidly across it, each leaving its momentary impression, and all mingling at times in a surging flood that swelled the veins of his temples to the point of rupture. Mechanically he paced his narrow cell, throwing frequent furtive glances at the closed door, as if he suspected himself watched. Often he stopped abruptly, and with head bowed and brows furrowed, seemed to surrender his soul to the forces with which it was wrestling. Often he clasped his head wildly in his hands and turned his beseeching eyes upward, as if he would call upon an invisible power above to aid him, yet restrained by the deadening conviction of experience that such appeal would meet with no response, and that he must stand in his own strength, however feeble.

Hours passed thus. The sun gained the zenith and the streets were ablaze. Belated marketers, with laden baskets atop their heads, were hurrying homeward, hugging the scanty shade of the glaring buildings. Shopkeepers were drawing their shutters and closing their heavy doors, leaving the hot noon hour asleep on the scorching portals. The midday *Angelus* called from the Cathedral tower. Then, as if shaken into remembrance of the message which the boy had brought him at daybreak, the man hurriedly took his black felt hat from the table, and without further preparation left the room.

The stone pavements and narrow brick walks, above which the intense heat hung in tremulous waves, were almost deserted as he hastened toward the Cathedral. The business of the morning was finished; trade was suspended until the sun, now dropping its fiery shafts straight as plummets, should have sunk behind La Popa. As he turned into the Calle Lozano an elderly woman, descending the winding brick stairway visible through the open door of one of the numerous old colonial houses in the lower end of this thoroughfare, called timidly to him.

"Marcelena," the priest returned, stopping. "The girl—is she—?"

"She is dying," interrupted the woman in a voice broken with sobs.

"Dying! Then the child—?"

"Yes, Padre, born an hour ago—a boy. It lives. Ah, *Santa Virgen,* such suffering! Pray for us, Mother of God!" murmured the weeping woman, bending her head and repeatedly making the sign of the cross.

"Who is with her now?" the priest continued hurriedly.

"Only Catalina. The doctor said he would return. He is good to the blessed child. And Padre Lorenzo came—but he would not shrive her little white soul—"

"And the father—?"

"He does not know," the woman sobbed. "Who would dare to tell him! Think you he would come? That he would own the babe? He would not give one blessed candle to set beside the little mother's poor sweet body! Ah, *Santa Maria!* who will buy Masses for her little soul? Who—?"

"But he *shall* know!" cried the priest, his face livid. "And he shall acknowledge his child and care for it! *Dios—!* But wait, Marcelena. I can do nothing now. But I will return." Leaving the woman sobbing prayers to the Virgin Mother, the priest hurried on.

Within the Cathedral the cool atmosphere met him with a sweet calm, which flowed over his perturbed soul like a benediction. He drew a chair from a pile in a corner and sat down for a moment near one of the little side chapels, to recover from the stifling heat without and prepare his thought for the impending interview with the Bishop. A dim twilight enveloped the interior of the building, affording a grateful relief from the blinding glare of the streets. It brought him a transient sense of peace—the peace which his wearied soul had never fully known. Peace brooded over the great nave, and hovered in the soft air that drifted slowly through the deserted aisle up to the High Altar, where lay the Sacred Host. A few votive candles were struggling to send their feeble glow through the darkness. The great images of the suffering Christ, of the Saints and the Virgin Mother had merged their outlines into the heavy shadows which lay upon them.

The haunting memory of years of soul-struggle with doubt and fear, of passionate longing for the light of truth in the gloom of superstition and man-made creeds, for guidance among the devious paths of human conjecture which lead nowhither—or to madness—seemed to fade into the darkness which wrapped him in that holy calm. After all, what had he won in his lifelong warfare with human beliefs? What had he gained by his mad opposition to Holy Church? There she stood, calm, majestic, undisturbed. Had not the Christ himself declared that the gates of hell should not prevail against her? Was not the unfoldment of truth a matter, not of years, but of ages? And were the minds of men to-day prepared for higher verities than those she offered? Did not the Church plant the seed as rapidly as the barren soil of the human mind was tilled and made fallow? True, her sons, whom he had so obstinately opposed, were blindly zealous. But were they wholly without

wisdom? Had not his own zeal been as unreasoningly directed to the forcing of events? And still, through it all, she had held her indulgent arms extended to him, as to all erring mankind. Why not now, like a tired child, weary of futile resistance, yield to her motherly embrace and be at last at peace? Again the temptation which he had stubbornly resisted for a lifetime urged upon him with all its mesmeric insistence.

He looked up, and his glance fell upon a small, glass-covered case, dimly visible in the uncertain light at one side of the little altar. The case was filled with tiny images of gold—*milagros*. Each had received priestly blessing, and each was believed to have worked a miraculous cure. The relaxed lines of the priest's careworn face instantly drew into an expression of hard austerity. Like the ebb of the ocean, his recalcitrant thought surged back again in a towering flood.

"What a spectacle!" he murmured. "Holy Church, assuming spiritual leadership of the world, sunken in idolatry, and publicly parading her fetishism in these lingering echoes of primitive demon-worship!"

Ah, the Master taught the omnipotence of God, whose ways he declared as high above the blind grovelings of man as the dome of heaven swings above earth. But how long, gentle Master, shall such as this be declared thy Father's ways? How long shall superstition and idolatry retain the power to fetter the souls of men? Is there no end to the black curse of ignorance of Truth, which, after untold centuries, still makes men sink with vain toil and consume with disease? And—are those who sit about Peter's gorgeous tomb and approve these things unerring guides to a right knowledge of God, to know whom, the Christ has said, is life eternal?

A step behind him broke the flow of his dark revery.

"Our good José dreams below, while His Grace bites his nails above," said a soft, mellifluous voice. *"Qué chiste!* It is—"

The priest sprang to his feet and faced the speaker. For a moment the men regarded each other, the one uncertain as to the impending event, but supremely confident of his ability to meet it; the other sick in soul and torn with mental struggle, but for the moment fired anew with the righteous wrath which his recent brief interview with the woman, Marcelena, had kindled.

"Wenceslas—" The priest spoke in a strained, uncertain tone, striving to hold his emotions in leash. "I have learned to-day—The girl, Maria—"

"Caro amigo," interrupted Wenceslas smoothly, "what you have learned to-day, or any other day, of the girl, Maria, is a lie."

"Hombre!" The priest turned livid. Stepping closer to Wenceslas—

"Do you think, inhuman! that I have not long known of your relations with this girl? Who has not! And, further, I know—and Cartagena shall know—that to-day she lies dying beside your child!"

Wenceslas recoiled. His face flushed, and the veins of his forehead swelled with a purple flood. Then a pallor spread over his features, and beads of perspiration started from his pores.

It was but momentary. Recovering himself, he laid a large hand on the priest's shoulder, and, his face assuming its wonted smile, said in his usual low tone, *"Amigo,* it seems that you have a penchant for spreading gossip. Think you I am ignorant of the fact that because of it Rome spewed you out for a meddlesome pest? Do you deceive yourself that Cartagena will open her ears to your garbled reports? The hag, Marcelena, lies! She has long hoped to gain some advantage from me, I have told you— But go now above and learn from His Grace, whom you have had the impudence to keep waiting all morning, how tongues that wag too freely can be silenced." He checked himself suddenly, as if he feared he had said too much. Then, turning on his heel, he quickly left the Cathedral.

The priest's head sank upon his breast, and he stood, infirm of purpose and choking with words which he could not voice. The whirl in which his confused brain had revolved for months —nay, years—had made the determination of conduct with him a matter of hours, of days, of weeks. Spontaneity of action had long since ceased within his fettered mind, where doubt had laid its detaining hand upon his judgment. Uncertainty of his steps, fear of their consequence, and dread lest he precipitate the calamity which he felt hung always just above him, had sapped the courage and strength of will which his soul needed for a determined stand, and left him incapable of decisive action, even in the face of grossest evil. The mordant reply of Wenceslas only strengthened his conviction of the futility of massing his own feeble forces against those of one so thoroughly entrenched as this man, who had the ear of the Bishop—nay, whose resourceful mind was now said to be actually directing the policies of the feeble old ecclesiastic who held the bishopric of Cartagena.

As if groping through the blackness of midnight, he moved slowly down the deserted nave of the Cathedral and mounted the winding stairs to the ambulatory above. Pausing at the door of the *sanctum* for a moment to gather up his remnant of moral strength, he entered and stood hesitant before the waiting Bishop.

CHAPTER 2

THE long War of Independence which destroyed the last vestige of Spanish control over the Peruvian colonies of South America was virtually brought to a close by the terrific battle of Ayacucho, fought on the plains between Pizarro's city of Lima and the ancient Inca seat of Cuzco in the fall of 1824. The result of this battle had been eagerly awaited in the city of Cartagena, capital of the newly formed federation of Colombia. It was known there that the Royalist army was concentrating for a final stand. It was known, too, that its veterans greatly outnumbered the nondescript band of patriots, many of whom were provided only with the *arma blanca*, the indispensable *machete* of tropical America. This fact lent a shred of encouragement to the few proud Tory families still remaining in the city and clinging forlornly to their broken fortunes, while vainly hoping for a reëstablishment of the imperial regimen, as they pinned their fate to this last desperate conflict. Among these, none had been prouder, none more loyal to the Spanish Sovereign, and none more liberal in dispensing its great wealth to bolster up a hopeless cause than the ancient and aristocratic family at whose head stood Don Ignacio José Marquez de Rincón, distinguished member of the *Cabildo*, and most loyal subject of his imperial majesty, King Ferdinand VII. of Spain.

The house of Rincón traced its lineage back to the ferocious adventurer, Juan de Rincón, favorite lieutenant of the renowned *Conquistador*, Pedro de Heredia. When the latter, in the year 1533, obtained from Charles V. the concession of New Andalusia, the whole territory comprised between the mouths of the Magdalena and Atrato rivers in what is now the Republic of Colombia, and undertook the conquest of this enormously rich district, the fire-eating Juan, whom the chroniclers of that romantic period quaintly described as "causing the same effects as lightning and quicksilver," was his most dependable support. Together they landed at the Indian village of Calamarí, and, after putting the pacific inhabitants to the sword—a manner of disposal most satisfactory to the practical Juan—laid the foundations of the present city of Cartagena, later destined to become the "Queen of the Indies," the pride, as it was the despair, of the haughty monarchs of Spain.

For his eminent services in this exploit Juan received a large tract of land in the most fertile part of the Magdalena valley—which he immediately staked and lost at the gaming-

table. As a measure of consolation, and doubtless with the view of checking Juan's gambling propensities, Pedro de Heredia then bestowed upon him a strip of bleak and unexplored mountain country adjacent to the river Atrato. Stung by his sense of loss, as well as by the taunts of his boisterous companions, and harassed by the practical conclusion that life's brevity would not permit of wiping out their innumerable insults singly by the sword, the raging Juan gathered together a few blood-drinking companions of that ilk and set out to find diversion of mind on his possessions.

Years passed. One day Juan again appeared on the streets of Cartagena, and this time with gold enough to buy the city. The discovery of rich auriferous sands on his estates adjoining the Atrato, which were worked extensively for him by the natives whom he and his companions had forced into subjection, had yielded him enormous wealth. He settled in Cartagena, determined to make it his future home, and at once set about buying great blocks of houses and erecting a palace for himself. He began to acquire lands and mines in all directions. He erected a sumptuous summer residence in what is now the suburb of Turbaco. He built an *arena,* and bred bulls for it from famous stock which he imported from the mother-country. He gave *fêtes* and public entertainments on the most lavish scale imaginable. In short, he quickly became Cartagena's most influential and distinguished citizen, as he was easily her richest.

But far more important to mention than all these dry details was the undoubted change of character which had come over the man himself. Perhaps it was the awful heat of the steaming Atrato valley that drew the fire from his livid soul. Perhaps it was a dawning appreciation of the opportunities made possible by his rapid acquisition of wealth that had softened his character. Some said he had seen a vision of the Virgin Mary. Others laid it to a terrible fever, in which for days he had lain delirious in the shadow of death. Be that as it may, the bloodthirsty *Conquistador,* who a few years before angrily shook the dust of Cartagena from his feet, had now returned a changed man.

At once Juan began to manifest in an ever increasing degree an interest in matters religious. In this respect his former character suffered a complete reversal. He assiduously cultivated the clergy, and gave large sums for the support of the Cathedral and the religious orders of the city. The Bishop became a frequent guest at his sumptuous table; and as often he in turn sought the Bishop for consultation anent his benefactions and, in particular, for consolation when

haunted by sad memories of his devilish exploits in early life. When the great-hearted Padre Bartolomé de las Casas, infirm but still indefatigable in his work for the protection and uplift of the Indians, arrived one memorable day in his little canoe which his devoted native servants had paddled through the *dique* from the great river beyond, Juan was the first to greet him and insist that he make his home with him while in the city. And on the night of the Padre's arrival it is said that Juan, with tears streaming down his scarred and wrinkled face, begged to be allowed to confess to him the awful atrocities which he had committed upon the innocent and harmless aborigines when, as was his wont, his breath hot with the lust of blood, he had fallen upon them without provocation and hewed them limb from limb.

In his old age the now gentle Juan, his former self almost obliterated, expressed a desire to renounce the world, bestow his great wealth upon the Church, and enter a monastery to pass his remaining years. Despite the protestations of his numerous family, for whom his religious zeal would permit him to leave but scanty provision, he was already formulating plans toward this end when death overtook him, and his vast estates descended intact to the family which he had founded.

So complete had been the transformation of Juan de Rincón during the many years that he lived after his return to Cartagena that the characteristics which he transmitted to his posterity were, in general, quite the reverse of those which he himself had manifested so abundantly in early life. Whereas, he had formerly been atrociously cruel, boastingly impious, and a scoffer at matters religious, his later descendants were generally tender of heart, soft of manner, and of great piety. Whereas, in early manhood he had been fiery and impulsive, quick of decision and immovable of opinion, his progeny were increasingly inclined to be deliberate in judgment and vacillating of purpose. So many of his descendants entered the priesthood that the family was threatened with extinction, for in the course of time it had become a sacred custom in the Rincón family to consecrate the first-born son to the Church. This custom at length became fixed, and was rigidly observed, even to the point of bigotry, despite the obliteration of those branches where there was but a single son.

The family, so auspiciously launched, waxed increasingly rich and influential; and when the smoldering fires of revolution burst into flame among the oppressed South American colonies, late in the year 1812, the house of Rincón, under royal and papal patronage, was found occupying the first position of eminence and prestige in the proud old city of

Cartagena. Its wealth had become proverbial. Its sons, educated by preceptors brought from Paris and Madrid, were prominent at home and abroad. Its honor was unimpeachable. Its fair name was one of the most resplendent jewels in the Spanish crown. And Don Ignacio epitomized loyalty to Sovereign and Pope.

With the inauguration of hostilities no fears were felt by the Rincón family for the ultimate success of the royalist arms, and Don Ignacio immediately despatched word to his Sovereign in Madrid that the wealth and services of his house were at the royal disposal. Of this offer Ferdinand quickly availed himself. The Rincón funds were drawn upon immediately and without stint to furnish men and muniments for the long and disastrous struggle. Of the family resources there was no lack while its members held their vast possessions of lands and mines. But when, after the first successes of the patriots, reprisals began to be visited upon the Tories of Cartagena, and their possessions fell, one after another, into the hands of the successful revolutionists, or were seized by former slaves, Don Ignacio found it difficult to meet his royal master's demands. The fickle King, already childish to the verge of imbecility, gave scant thanks in return for the Rincón loyalty, and when at last, stripped of his fortune, deserted by all but the few Tory families who had the courage to remain in Cartagena until the close of the war, Don Ignacio received with sinking heart the news of the battle of Ayacucho, he knew full well that any future appeal to Ferdinand for recognition of his great sacrifices would fall upon unhearing ears.

But to remain in republican Cartagena after the final success of the revolutionists was to the royalist Don Ignacio quite impossible. Even if permitted the attempt, he was so attached to the ancient order of things that he could not adjust himself to the radically changed conditions. So, gathering about him the sorrowing remnant of his family, and converting into a pitifully small sum his few remaining possessions, he took passage on an English trader and sailed for the mother-country, to begin life anew among those whose speech and customs were most familiar to him.

He settled in Seville, where the elder of his two sons, Rafaél de Rincón, a lad of fifteen, was studying for the priesthood, under the patronage of the Archbishop. There he established himself in the wine business, associating with him his second son, Carlos, only a year the junior of his brother. But, broken in spirit as well as in fortune, he made little headway, and two years later died pitiably in poverty and obscurity.

Through the influence of the Archbishop, the business,

which Carlos was far too young and immature to conduct, was absorbed by larger interests, and the young lad retained as an employe. As the years passed the boy developed sufficient commercial ability to enable him to retain his position and to extract from it enough to provide for the needs of himself and his dependents. He married, late in life, a woman whose family had fled from Cartagena with his own and settled in Seville. She was but a babe in arms at the time of the exodus, and many years his junior. A year after the marriage a child was born to them, a son. The babe's birth was premature, following a fright which the mother received when attacked by a beggar. But the child lived. And, according to the honored family custom, which the father insisted on observing as rigidly in Spain as it had been formerly in Cartagena, this son, José Francisco Enrique de Rincón, was at birth consecrated to the service of God in the Holy Catholic Church.

CHAPTER 3

IF, as Thoreau said, "God is on the side of the most sensitive," then He should have been very close to the timid, irresolute lad in Seville, in whom the softer traits of character, so unexpectedly developed in the adventurous founder of the Rincón family, now stood forth so prominently. Somber, moody, and retiring; delicately sensitive and shrinking; acutely honest, even to the point of morbidity; deeply religious and passionately studious, with a consuming zeal for knowledge, and an unsatisfied yearning for truth, the little José early in life presented a strange medley of characteristics, which bespoke a need of the utmost care and wisdom on the part of those who should have the directing of his career. Forced into the world before his time, and strongly marked by his mother's fear; afflicted with precarious health, and subjected to long and desperate illnesses in childhood, his little soul early took on a gloom and asceticism wholly unnatural to youth. Fear was constantly instilled into his acutely receptive mind by his solicitous, doting parents; and his life was thereby stunted, warped, and starved. He was reared under the constant reminder of the baleful effects of food, of air, of conduct, of this and that invisible force inimical to health; and terror and anxiety followed him like a ghost and turned about all his boyish memories. Under these repressing influences his mind could not but develop with a lack of stamina for self-support. Hesitancy and vacillation became pronounced. In

time, the weight of any important decision gave him acute, unendurable agony of mind. Called upon to decide for himself a matter of import, his thought would become confused, his brain torpid, and in tears and perplexity the tormented lad would throw himself into the arms of his anxious parents and beg to be told what course to pursue.

Thus his nature grew to depend upon something stronger than itself to twine about. He sought it in his schoolmates; but they misread him. The little acts which were due to his keen sensitiveness or to his exaggerated reticence of disposition were frequently interpreted by them as affronts, and he was generally left out of their games, or avoided entirely. His playmates consequently became fewer and more transient as the years gained upon him, until at length, trodden upon, but unable to turn, he withdrew his love from the world and bestowed it all upon his anxious mother. She became his only intimate, and from her alone he sought the affection for which he yearned with an intensity that he could not express. Shunning the boisterous, frolicking children at the close of the school day, he would seek her, and, nestling at her side, her hand clasped in his, would beg her to talk to him of the things with which his childish thought was struggling. These were many, but they revolved about a common center—religion.

The salient characteristics already mentioned were associated with others, equally prominent, and no less influential in the shaping of his subsequent career. With the development of his deep, inward earnestness there had appeared indications of latent powers of mind that were more than ordinary. These took the form of childish precocity in his studies, clearness of spiritual vision, and maturity in his conduct and mode of life. The stunting of his physical nature threw into greater prominence his exaggerated soul-qualities, his tenderness, his morbid conscientiousness, and a profound emotionalism which, at the sight of a great painting, or the roll of the Cathedral organ, would flood his eyes and fill his throat with sobs. When the reckless founder of the family experienced a reversal of his own dark traits of soul, nearly three centuries before, it was as if the pendulum had swung too far in the opposite direction, and at the extreme point of its arc had left the little José, with the sterner qualities of the old *Conquistador* wholly neutralized by self-condemnation, fear, infirmity of purpose, a high degree of intellectuality, and a soul-permeating religious fervor.

At the mention of religion the timid lad at once became passionate, engrossed—nay, obsessed. In his boyhood years, before the pall of somber reticence had settled over him, he had

been impressed with the majesty of the Church and the gorgeousness of her material fabric. The religious ideals taught him by his good mother took deep root. But the day arrived when the expansion of his intellect reached such a point as to enable him to detect a flaw in her reasoning. It was but a little rift, yet the sharp edge of doubt slipped in. Alas! from that hour he ceased to drift with the current of popular theological belief; his frail bark turned, and launched out upon the storm-tossed sea, where only the outstretched hand of the Master, treading the heaving billows through the thick gloom, saved it at length from destruction.

The hungry lad began to question his parents incessantly regarding the things of the spirit. His teachers in the parochial school he plied with queries which they could not meet. Day after day, while other boys of his tender age romped in the street, he would steal into the great Cathedral and stand, pathetically solitary, before the statues of the Christ and the Virgin Mary, yearning over the problems with which his childish thought was struggling, and the questions to which no one could return satisfying replies.

Here again the boy seemed to manifest in exaggerated form the reversed characteristics of the old *Conquistador*. But, unlike that of the pious Juan, the mind of the little José was not so simple as to permit it to accept without remonstrance the tenets of his family's faith. Blind acceptance of any teaching, religious or secular, early became quite impossible to him. This entailed many an hour of suffering to the lad, and brought down upon his little head severe punishments from his preceptors and parents. But in vain they admonished and threatened. The child demanded proofs; and if proofs were not at hand, his acceptance of the mooted teaching was but tentative, generally only an outward yielding to his beloved mother's inexorable insistence. Many the test papers he returned to his teachers whereon he had written in answer to the questions set, "I am taught to reply thus; but in my heart I do not believe it." Vainly the teachers appealed to his parents. Futilely the latter pleaded and punished. The placid receptiveness of the Rincón mind, which for more than three hundred years had normally performed its absorptive functions and imbibed the doctrines of its accepted and established human authorities, without a trace of the heresy of suspecting their genuineness, had at last experienced a reversal. True, the boy had been born in the early hours of nineteenth century doubt and religious skepticism. The so-called scientific spirit, buried for ages beneath the *débris* of human conjecture, was painfully emerging and preening its wings for flight. The "higher

criticism" was nascent, and ancient traditions were already beginning to totter on the foundations which the Fathers had set. But Spain, close wrapped in mediaeval dreams, had suffered no taint of "modernism." The portals of her mind were well guarded against the entrance of radical thought, and her dreamers were yet lulled into lethargic adherence to outworn beliefs and musty creeds by the mesmerism of priestly tradition. The peculiar cast of mind of the boy José was not the product of influences from without, but was rather an exemplification of the human mind's reversion to type, wherein the narrow and bigoted mentality of many generations had expanded once more into the breadth of scope and untrammeled freedom of an ancient progenitor.

As the boy grew older his ability to absorb learning increased astonishingly. His power of analysis, his keen perception and retentive memory soon advanced him beyond the youths of his own age, and forced him to seek outside the pale of the schoolroom for the means to satisfy his hunger for knowledge. He early began to haunt the bookstalls of Seville, and day after day would stand for hours searching the treasures which he found there, and mulling over books which all too frequently were *anathema* to the orthodox. Often the owner of one of these shops, who knew the lad's parents, and whose interest had been stirred by his passion for reading, would let him take one or more of the coveted volumes home over night, for the slender family purse would not permit him to purchase what his heart craved. Then came feasts for his famished little soul which often lasted until daybreak.

It happened one evening that, when he crept off to his little room to peer into one of these borrowed treasures, his father followed him. Pushing the chamber door softly open the parent found the boy propped against his pillow in bed, absorbed in a much-thumbed volume which he was reading by the pale light of the single candle.

"Is it thus that you deceive your poor parents?" the fond father began, in a tone of mock severity.

The startled lad stifled a cry and hastily thrust the book beneath his pillow. The father's interest now became genuine. Leaning over the terrified boy he drew forth the volume.

"Voltaire!"

The doting father stood petrified. Voltaire, *Antichrist*, Archfiend of impiety—and in the hands of his beloved son!

Sleep fled the little household that night. In his father's arms, while the distressed mother hung over them, the boy sobbed out his confession. He had not intended to deceive. He had picked up this book in the stall without knowing its

nature. He had become so interested in what it said about the Virgin Mary that he forgot all else. The shopkeeper had found him reading it, and had laughed and winked at his clerk when he bade the boy take it home for the night. The book had fascinated him. He himself—did not his father know?—had so often asked how the Virgin could be the mother of God, and why men prayed to her. Yes, he knew it mocked their faith—and the sacred Scriptures. He knew, too, that his father would not approve of it. That was why he had tried to hide it beneath his pillow. He had been wicked, desperately wicked, to deceive his dear parents—But the book—It made him forget —It said so many things that seemed to be true—And—and—

"Oh, *padre mio,* forgive me, forgive me! I want to know the truth about God and the world!" The delicate frame of the young lad shook in paroxysms of grief.

Alas! it was but the anguished soul-cry which has echoed through the halls of space since time began. What a mockery to meet it with empty creed and human dogma! Alas! what a crime against innocence to stifle the honest questionings of a budding mind with the musty cloak of undemonstrable beliefs.

"But, my son, have I not often told you? The Holy Church gives us the truth," replied the father, frightened by the storm which raged within the childish soul, yet more alarmed at the turn which the mind of his cherished son was apparently taking—his only son, dedicated to the service of God from the cradle, and in whom the shattered hopes of this once proud family were now centered.

"But this book laughs at us because we pray to a woman!" sobbed the boy.

"True. But does not its author need the prayers of so pure a woman as the Virgin? Do we not all need them? And is it not likely that one so good as she would have great influence with God—much greater than we ourselves, or even the best of men, could have?"

"But how can she be the mother of God? The Bible does not teach that!"

"How do you know that the Bible does not teach it, my son?"

"I—I—have read—the Bible," faltered the lad.

"You have read the Bible!" cried the astonished father. "And where have you done that, you wicked boy?"

"At the bookstore of Mariano," confessed the trembling child.

"*Madre de Dios!*" burst from the father, as he started to his feet. "Mariano is a wicked infidel! The Bishop shall hear of this! Ah, well may the Holy Father in Rome grieve to see

his innocent babes led astray by these servants of hell! But, my son," returning to the boy and clasping him again in his arms, "it is not too late. The Virgin Mother has protected you. You meant no harm. Satan covets your pure little soul —But he shall not have it!" The father's tremulous voice mounted high, "No, by the Saints in heaven, he shall not have it!"

The boy's assurance slowly returned under the influence of his father's tender solicitude, even though he remained dimly conscious of the rift widening little by little between his parents' settled convictions and his own groping thought. With the assuaging of his grief came again those insistent questions which throughout his life had tormented his peace and driven him even to the doors of infidels in search of truth.

"Father," he began timidly, "why was I wicked to read the Bible?"

"Because, my son, in doing so you yielded to the temptations of Satan. The Bible is a great and mysterious book, written by God himself. He meant it to be explained to us by the Holy Father, who is the head of the Church which the good Saint Peter founded. We are not great enough nor good enough to understand it. The Holy Father, who cares for God's Church on earth, he is good enough, and he alone can interpret it to us. Satan tries to do with all men just what he did with you, my child. He seeks to make them read the Bible so that he can confuse them and rob them of their faith. Then when he gets possession of their souls he drags them down with him to hell, where they are lost forever."

"And does the Holy Father really believe that Mary is the mother of God?" persisted the boy, raising his tear-stained face.

"Yes—is she not? The blessed Saviour said that he and God were one. And, as Mary is the mother of Christ, she is also the mother of God—is she not? Let us read what the good Saint John Chrysostom says." He rose and went into another room, returning in a few minutes with a little volume. Taking the boy again on his knee, he continued, "The blessed Saint tells us that the Virgin Mary was made the mother of God in order that she might obtain salvation for many who, on account of their wicked lives, could not be saved, because they had so offended divine justice, but yet, by the help of her sweet mercy and mighty intercession, might be cleansed and rendered fit for heaven. My little son, you have always been taught that Mary is heaven's Queen. And so she is ours, and reigns in heaven for us. Jesus loves to have her close to him, and he can never refuse her requests. He always grants

what she asks. And that is the reason why we pray to her. She never forgets us—never!"

A troubled look crossed the boy's face. Then he began anew. "Father dear, God made everything, did He not? The Bible says that, anyway."

"Yes, child."

"Did He make Satan?"

The father hesitated. The child hurried on under the lash of his holy inquisitiveness. "Father, how did evil come into the world? Is God both good and bad? And how can a good God punish us forever for sins committed here in only a few short years?"

"Ah, *queridito!*" cried the harassed father. "Such questions should not have entered your little head for years to come! Why can you not run and play as do other children? Why are you not happy as they are? Why must you spend your days thinking of things that are far too deep for you? Can you not wait? Some day you shall know all. Some day, when you have entered the service of God, perhaps you may even learn these things from the Holy Father himself. Then you will understand how the good God lets evil tempt us in order that our faith in Him may be exercised and grow strong—"

"And He lets Satan harm us purposely?" The boy's innocent dark eyes looked up appealingly into his father's face.

"It is only for a short time, little son. And only those who are never fit for heaven go down with Satan. But you are not one of those," he hastily added, straining the boy to him. "And the Masses which the good priests say for us will lift us out of purgatory and into heaven, where the streets are pure gold and the gates are pearl. And there we will all live together for—"

"Father," interrupted the boy, "I have thought of these things for a long, long time. I do not believe them. And I do not wish to become a priest."

The father fell silent. It was one of those tense moments which every man experiences when he sees a withering frost slowly gathering over the fondest hopes of a lifetime. The family of Rincón, aristocratic, intensely loyal to Church and State, had willingly laid itself upon the sacrificial altar in deference to its honored traditions. Custom had become law. Obedience of son to parent and parent to Sovereign, spiritual or temporal, had been the guiding star of the family's destinies. To think was lawful; but to hold opinions at variance with tradition was unspeakable heresy. Spontaneity of action was commendable; but conduct not prescribed by King or Pope

was unpardonable crime. Loss of fortune, of worldly power and prestige, were as nothing; deviation from the narrow path trodden by the illustrious scions of the great Juan was everything. That this lad, to whom had descended the undying memories of a long line of glorious defenders of kingly and papal power, should presume to shatter the sacred Rincón traditions, was unbelievable. It was none other than the work of Satan. The boy had fallen an innocent victim to the devil's wiles.

But the house of Rincón had withstood the assaults of the son of perdition for more than three centuries. It would not yield now! The all-powerful Church of Rome stood behind it —and the gates of hell could not prevail against her! The Church would save her own. Yes, the father silently argued, through his brother's influence the case should be laid before His Eminence, the Archbishop. And, if need be, the Holy Father himself should be called upon to cast the devil out of this tormented child. To argue with the boy now were futile, even dangerous. The lad had grown up with full knowledge of his parents' fond hopes for his future. He had never openly opposed them, although at times the worried mother would voice her fears to the father when her little son brought his perplexing questions to her and failed to find satisfaction. But until this night the father had felt no alarm. Indeed, he had looked upon the child's inquisitiveness as but a logical consequence of his precocity and unusual mental powers, in which he himself felt a father's swelling pride. To his thought it augured rapid promotion in the Church; it meant in time a Cardinal's hat. Ah, what glorious possibilities! How the prestige of the now sunken family would soar! Happily he had been aroused to an appreciation of the boy's really desperate state in time. The case should go before the Archbishop to-morrow, and the Church should hear his call to hasten to the rescue of this wandering lamb.

CHAPTER 4

SEVILLE is called the heart of Spain. In a deeper sense it is her soul. Within it, extremes touch, but only to blend into a harmonious unit which manifests the Spanish temperament and character more truly there than in any other part of the world. In its Andalusian atmosphere the religious instinct of the Spaniard reaches its fullest embodiment. True, its bull-fights are gory spectacles; but they are also gorgeous

and solemn ceremonies. Its *ferias* are tremendously worldly; but they are none the less stupendous religious *fêtes.* Its picturesque Easter processions, when colossal images of the Virgin are carried among bareheaded and kneeling crowds, smack of paganism; but we cannot question the genuineness of the religious fervor thus displayed. Its Cathedral touches the *arena;* and its Archbishop washes the feet of its old men. Its religion is still the living force which unites and levels, exalts and debases. And its religion is Rome.

On the fragrant spring morning following the discovery of the execrated Voltaire, the little José, tightly clutching his father's hand, threaded the narrow Sierpes and crossed the Prado de San Sebastian, once the *Quemador,* where the Holy Inquisition was wont to purge heresy from human souls with fire. The father shuddered, and his stern face grew dark, as he thought of the revolting scenes once enacted in that place in the name of Christ; and he inwardly voiced a prayer of gratitude that the Holy Office had ceased to exist. Yet he knew that, had he lived in that day, he would have handed his beloved son over to that awful institution without demurral, rather than see him develop those heretical views which were already rising from the soil of his fertile, inquisitive mind.

The tinkling of a bell sounded down the street. Father and son quickly doffed their hats and knelt on the pavement, while a priest, mounted on a mule, rode swiftly past on his way to the bedside of a dying communicant, the flickering lights and jingling bell announcing the fact that he bore with him the Sacred Host.

"Please God, you will do the same some day, my son," murmured the father. But the little José kept his eyes to the pavement, and would make no reply.

Meanwhile, at a splendidly carved table in the library of his palatial residence, surrounded by every luxury that wealth and ecclesiastical influence could command, the Archbishop, pious shepherd of a restless flock, sat with clouded brow and heavy heart. The festive ceremonials of Easter were at hand, and the Church was again preparing to display her chief splendors. But on the preceding Easter disturbances had interrupted the processions of the Virgin; and already rumors had reached the ears of the Archbishop of further trouble to be incited during the approaching Holy Week by the growing body of skeptics and anticlericals. To what extent these liberals had assumed the proportions of a propaganda, and how active they would now show themselves, were questions causing the holy man deep concern. Heavy sighs escaped him as he voiced his fears to his sympathetic secretary and associate, Rafaél de Rincón, the gaunt, ascetic uncle of the little José.

"Alas!" he murmured gloomily. "Since the day that our Isabella yielded to her heretic ministers and thrust aside the good Sister Patrocinio, Spain has been in a perilous state. After that unholy act the dethronement and exile of the Queen were inevitable."

"True, Your Eminence," replied the secretary. "But is there no cause for hope in the elevation of her son, Alfonso, to the throne?"

"He is but seventeen—and absent from Spain six years. He lacks the force of his talented mother. And there is no longer a Sister Patrocinio to command the royal ear."

"Unfortunate, I admit, Your Eminence. She bore the *stigmata*, the very marks of our Saviour's wounds, imprinted on her flesh, and worked his miracles. But, in Alfonso—"

"No, no," interrupted the Archbishop impatiently; "he has styled himself the first Republican in Europe. He will make Catholicism the state religion; but he will extend religious toleration to all. He is consumptive in mind as well as in body. And the army—alas! what may we look for from it when soldiers like this Polo Hernandez refuse to kneel during the Mass?"

"The man has been arrested, Your Eminence," the secretary offered in consolation.

"But the court-martial acquitted him!"

"True. Yet he has now been summoned before the supreme court in Madrid."

The Archbishop's face brightened somewhat. "And the result—what think you?"

The secretary shrugged his drooping shoulders. "They will condemn him."

Yes, doubtless he would be condemned, for mediaevalism dies hard in Spain. But the incident was portentous, and the Archbishop and his keen secretary heard in it an ominous echo.

A servant appeared at the heavy portieres, and at a sign from the secretary ushered José and his father into the august presence awaiting them.

An hour later the pair emerged from the palace and started homeward. His Eminence, rousing himself from the profound revery in which he had been sunk for some moments, turned to his expectant secretary.

"A Luther in embryo!" he ejaculated.

"I feared as much, Your Eminence," returned the austere secretary.

"And yet, a remarkable intellect! Astonishing mental power! But all tainted with the damnable so-called scientific spirit!"

"True, Your Eminence."

"But marked you not his deep reverence for God? And his sturdy honesty? And how, despite his embarrassment, the religious zeal of his soul shown forth?"

"He is morbidly honest, Your Grace."

"A trait I wish we might employ to our own advantage," mused the churchman. Then, continuing, "He is learned far beyond his years. Indeed, his questions put me to some stress —but only for the difficulty of framing replies intelligible to a mind so immature," he added hastily. "Either he feared my presence, or he is naturally shrinking."

"He is so by nature, Your Eminence."

The Archbishop reflected. "Naïve—pure—simple—mature, yet childish. Have we covered the ground?"

"Not fully, Your Eminence. We omitted to mention his absorbing filial devotion."

"True. And that, you tell me, is most pronounced."

"It is his strongest characteristic, Your Eminence. He has no will to oppose it."

"Would that his devotion were for Holy Church!" sighed the Archbishop.

"I think it may be so directed, Your Eminence," quickly returned the secretary.

"But—would he ever consent to enter the priesthood? And once in, would he not prove a most dangerous element?"

The secretary made a deprecating gesture. "If I may suggest, such a man as he promises to become is far more dangerous outside of the Church than within, Your Eminence."

The Archbishop studied the man's face for a few moments. "There is truth in your words, my friend. Yet how, think you, may he be secured?"

"Your Eminence," replied the secretary warmly, "pardon these suggestions in matters where you are far better fitted to pass sound judgment than a humble servant of the Church like myself. But in this case intimacy with my brother's family affords me data which may be serviceable in bringing this matter to a conclusion. If I may be permitted—"

The Archbishop nodded an unctuous and patronizing appreciation of his elderly secretary's position, and the latter continued—

"Your Eminence, Holy Week is approaching, and we are beset with fears lest the spirit of heresy which, alas! is abroad in our fair city, shall manifest itself in such disturbances as may force us to abandon these religious exercises in future. I need not point out the serious nature of these demonstrations. Nor need I suggest that their relative unimportance last year

was due solely to lack of strong leadership. Already our soldiers begin to refuse to kneel during the Mass. The Holy Church is not yet called upon to display her weapons. But who shall say to what measures she may not be forced when an able and fearless leader shall arise among the heretics? Today there has stood before Your Eminence a lad possessing, in my opinion, the latent qualifications for such leadership. I say, latent. I use the term advisedly, for I know that he appears to manifest the Rincón lack of decision. But so did I at his age. And who can say when the unfolding of his other powers, now so markedly indicated, may not force the development of those certain traits of character in which he now seems deficient, but which, developed, would make him a power in the world? Shall the Church permit this promising lad to stray from her, possibly later to join issue with her enemies and use his great gifts to propagate heresy and assault her foundations? Are we faithful to our beloved Mother if we do not employ every means, foul or fair, to destroy her enemies, even in the cradle? Remember, 'He who gains the youth, possesses the future,' as the saying goes."

"Loyally spoken, faithful son," replied the Archbishop, shifting into a more comfortable position. "And you suggest—?"

"This: that we wisely avail ourselves of his salient characteristics—his weaknesses, if you wish—and secure him now to the Church."

"And, more specifically—?" with increasing animation.

"Your Eminence is already aware of the custom in our family of consecrating the first-born son to the service of God. This boy has been so consecrated from birth. It is the dearest hope of his parents. At present their wishes are still his law. Their judgments yet formulate his conduct. His sense of honor is acute. Your Eminence can see that his word is sacred. His oath once taken would bind him eternally. *It is for us to secure that oath!*"

"And how?" The Archbishop leaned forward eagerly.

"We, coöperating with his parents, will cater to his consuming passion for learning, and offer him the education which the limited resources of his family cannot provide. We save him from the drudgery of commercialism, and open to him the life of the scholar. We suggest to him a career consecrated to study and holy service. The Church educates him—he serves his fellow-men through her. Once ordained, his character is such, I believe, that he could never become an apostate. And, whatever his services to Holy Church may be thereafter, she at least will have effectually disposed of a possible op-

ponent. She has all to gain, and nothing to lose by such procedure. Unless I greatly mistake the Rincón character, the lad will yield to our inducements and his mother's prayers, the charm of the Church and the bias of her tutelage, and ultimately take the oath of ordination. After that—"

"My faithful adviser," interrupted the Archbishop genially, as visions of the Cardinal's hat for eminent services hovered before him, "write immediately to Monsignor, Rector of the *Seminario*, in Rome. Say that he must at once receive, at our expense and on our recommendation, a lad of twelve, who greatly desires to be trained for the priesthood."

CHAPTER 5

THUS did the Church open her arms to receive her wandering child. Thus did her infallible wisdom, as expressed through her zealous agents in Seville, essay to solve the perplexing problems of this agitated little mind, and whisper to its confused throbbing, "Peace, be still." The final disposition came to the boy not without some measure of relief, despite his protest. The long days of argument and pleading, of assurance that within the Church he should find abundant and satisfactory answers to his questions, and of explanations which he was adjured to receive on faith until such time as he might be able to prove their soundness, had utterly exhausted his sensitive little soul, and left him without the combative energy or will for further remonstrance.

Nor was the conflict solely a matching of his convictions against the desires of his parents and the persuasions of the Archbishop and his loyal secretary. The boy's hunger for learning alone might have caused him to yield to the lure of a broad education. Moreover, his nature contained not one element of commercialism. The impossibility of entering the wine business with his father, or of spending his life in physical toil for a bare maintenance, was as patent to himself, even at that early age, as to his parents. His bent was wholly intellectual. But he knew that his father could not afford him an education. Yet this the Church now offered freely. Again, his nature was essentially religious. The Church now extended all her learning, all her vast resources, all her spiritual power, to develop and foster this instinct. Nay, more, to protect and guide its development into right channels.

The fact, too, that the little José was a child of extreme emotions must not be overlooked in an estimate of the influ-

ences which bore upon him during these trying days. His devotion to an object upon which he had set his affections amounted to obsession. He adored his parents—reverenced his father—worshiped his mother. The latter he was wont to compare to the flowers, to the bright-plumed birds, to the butterflies that hovered in the sunlight of their little *patio*. He indited childish poems to her, and likened her in purity and beauty to the angels and the Virgin Mary. Her slightest wish was his inflexible law. Not that he was never guilty of childish faults of conduct, of little whims of stubbornness and petulance; but his character rested on a foundation of honesty, sincerity, and filial love that was never shaken by the summer storms of naughtiness which at times made their little disturbances above.

The parents breathed a sigh of relief when the tired child at last bowed to their wishes and accepted the destiny thrust upon him. The coming of a son to these loyal royalists and zealous Catholics had meant the imposition of a sacred trust. That he was called to high service in the Church of God was evidenced by Satan's early and malicious attacks upon him. There was but one course for them to pursue, and they did not for a moment question its soundness. To their thought, this precocious child lacked the wisdom and balance which comes only with years. The infallible Church, their all-wise spiritual guide, supported their contentions. What they did was for her and for the eternal welfare of the boy. Likewise, for the maintenance of family pride and honor in a generation tainted with liberalism and distrust of the sacred traditions.

The Church, on the other hand, in the august person of the Archbishop, had accomplished a triumph. She had recognized the child's unusual gifts of mind, and had been alert to the dangers they threatened. If secured to herself, and their development carefully directed, they would mold him into her future champion. If, despite her careful weeding and pruning, they expanded beyond the limits which she set, *they should be stifled!* The peculiar and complex nature of the child offered her a tremendous advantage. For, if reactionary, his own highly developed sense of honor, together with his filial devotion and his intense family pride, should of themselves be forced to choke all activity in the direction of apostasy and liberalism. Heaven knew, the Church could not afford to neglect any action which promised to secure for her a loyal son; or, failing that, at least effectually check in its incipiency the development of a threatened opponent! Truly, as the astute secretary had said, this boy might prove troublesome within the fold; but he might also prove more dangerous with-

out. Verily, it was a triumph for the cause of righteousness! And after the final disposition, the good Archbishop had sat far into the night in the comfort of his *sanctum*, drowsing over his pleasant meditations on the rewards which his unflagging devotion to the cause of Holy Church was sure some day to bring.

Time sped. The fragrant Sevillian spring melted into summer, and summer merged with fall. The Rincón family was adjusting itself to the turn in the career of its heir, the guardian and depository of its revived hopes. During the weeks which intervened between his first interview with the Archbishop and his final departure for Rome, José had been carefully prepared by his uncle, who spared no effort to stimulate in the boy a proper appreciation of his high calling. He was taught that as a priest of the Holy Catholic Church he would become a representative of the blessed Christ among men. His mission would be to carry on the Saviour's work for the salvation of souls, and, with the power of Christ and in His name, to instruct mankind in true beliefs and righteous conduct. He would forgive sins, impose penalties, and offer sacrificial atonement in the body of the Saviour—in a word, he was to become *sacerdos alter Christus*, another Christ. His training for this exalted work would cover a period of six or eight years, perhaps longer, and would fit him to become a power among men, a conserver of the sacred faith, and an ensample of the highest morality.

"Ah, *sobrinito*," the sharp-visaged, gray-haired uncle had said, "truly a fortunate boy are you to hear this grandest of opportunities knocking at your door! A priest—a God! Nay, even more than God, for as priest God gives you power over Himself!"

The boy's wondering eyes widened, and a look of mingled confusion and astonishment came into his wan face. "I do not see, *tío mío*—I do not see," he murmured.

"But you shall, you shall! And you shall understand the awful responsibility which God thus reposes upon you, when He gives you power to do greater things than He did when He created the world. You shall command the Christ, and He shall come down at your bidding. Ah, *chiquito*, a fortunate boy!" But the lad turned wearily away, without sharing his uncle's enthusiasm.

The day before his departure José was again conducted before the Archbishop, and after listening to a lengthly résumé of what the Church was about to do for him, and what she expected in return, two solemn vows were exacted from him—

"First," announced the uncle, in low, deliberate tones, "you

will solemnly promise your mother and your God that, daily praying to be delivered from the baneful influences which now cause doubt and questioning in your mind, and refraining from voicing them to your teachers or fellow-students, you will strive to accept all that is taught you in Rome, deferring every endeavor to prove the teachings you are to receive until the end of your long course, when, by training and discipline, you shall have so developed in goodness, purity, and power, that you shall be found worthy to receive spiritual confirmation of the great tenets upon which the Holy Roman Catholic Church has been founded and reared."

He paused for a moment to catch his breath and let his portentous words sink into the quivering brain of the lad before him. Then he resumed—

"Second, keeping ever in mind your debt of gratitude to the Church, you promise faithfully to finish your course, and at the end offer yourself to the service of God in the holy priesthood."

The solemn hush that lay over the room when he finished was broken only by the muffled sobs of the mother.

Tender in years, plunged into grief at the impending separation from home and all that he held dear, the boy knelt before the secretary and gave his trembling word to observe these obligations. Then, after he had kissed the Bible and the Archbishop's extended hand, he threw himself upon the floor in a torrent of tears.

On the following morning, a bright, sparkling November day, the little José, spent with emotion, tore himself from his mother's clinging embrace and set out for Rome, accompanied by his solicitous uncle.

"And, *queridito,*" were the mother's last words, "I have your promise that never will you voluntarily leave the Church?"

The appeal which his beseeching look carried back to her was not granted. He slowly bowed his acquiescence, and turned away. A week later he had entered upon the retreat with which the school year opens in the *Seminario.*

CHAPTER 6

ROME, like a fallen gladiator, spent and prostrate on the Alban hills, still awaits the issue of the conflict between the forces of life and death within. Dead, where the blight of pagan and mediaeval superstition has eaten into the quivering tissues; it lives where the pulsing current of modern-

ism expands its shrunken arteries and bears the nourishing truth. Though eternal in tradition and colossal in material achievement, the glory of the Imperial City nevertheless rests on a foundation of perishable human ambitions, creeds, and beliefs, manifested outwardly for a time in brilliant deeds, great edifices, and comprehensive codes, but always bearing within themselves the seeds of their own decay. No trophy brought to her gates in triumph by the Caesars ever approached in worth the simple truth with which Paul of Tarsus, chained to his jailer, illumined his gloomy dungeon. Had the religious principles which he and his devoted associates labored so unselfishly to impart to a benighted world for its own good been recognized by Rome as the "pearl without price," she would have built upon them as foundation stones a truer glory, and one which would have drawn the nations of the earth to worship within her walls. But Rome, in her master, Constantine, saw only the lure of a temporal advantage to be gained by fettering the totally misunderstood teachings of Jesus with the shackles of organized politics. From this unhallowed marriage of religion and statecraft was born that institution unlike either parent, yet exhibiting modified characteristics of each, the Holy Church. To this institution, now mighty in material riches and power, but still mediaeval in character, despite the assaults of centuries of progress, a combination of political maneuver, bigotry, and weakness committed the young José, tender, sensitive, receptive, and pure, to be trained as an agent to further its world-embracing policies.

The retreat upon which the boy at once entered on his arrival at the seminary extended over ten days. During this time there were periods of solitary meditation—hours when his lonely heart cried out in anguish for his beloved mother—visits to the blessed sacrament, recitations of the office, and consultations with his spiritual advisers, at which times his promises to his parents and the Archbishop, coupled with his natural reticence and the embarrassment occasioned by his strange environment, sealed his lips and prevented the voicing of his honest questions and doubts. It was sought through this retreat to so bring the lad under the influence of the great religious teachings as to most deeply impress his heart and mind with the importance of the seminary training upon which he had entered. His day began with the dreaded meditation at five in the morning, followed by hearing the Mass and receiving Communion. It closed, after study and class work, with another visit to the blessed sacrament, recital of the Rosary, spiritual reading, and prayer. On Sundays he assisted at solemn High Mass in the church of the *Seminario Pio.* One

day a week was a holiday; but only in the sense that it was devoted to visiting hospitals and charitable institutions, in order to acquire practical experience and a foretaste of his future work among the sick and needy. Clad in his little violet cassock, low-crowned, three-cornered hat, and *soprana*, he might be seen on these holidays trotting along with his fellow-students in the wake of their superior, his brow generally contracted, and his childish face seldom lighted by a happy smile.

The first year passed without special incident. The boy, filled with that quenchless ambition to know, which characterizes the finest minds, entered eagerly upon his studies and faithfully observed his promises. If his tender soul warped and his fresh, receptive mind shriveled under the religious tutelage he received, no one but himself knew it, not even his fond mother, as she clasped him again in her arms when he returned home for the first summer vacation. With the second year there began studies of absorbing interest to the boy, and the youthful mind fed hungrily. This seemed to have the effect of expanding somewhat his self-contained little soul. He appeared to grow out of himself to a certain extent, to become less timid, less reticent, even more sociable; and when he returned to Seville again at the close of the year he had apparently lost much of the somberness of disposition which had previously characterized him. The Archbishop examined him closely; but the boy, speaking little, gave no hint of the inner working of his thought; and if his soul seethed and fermented within, the Rincón pride and honor covered it with a placid demeanor and a bearing of outward calm. When the interview ended and the lad had departed, the Archbishop descended to the indignity of roundly slapping his ascetic secretary on his emaciated back, as an indication of triumphant joy. The boy certainly was being charmed into deep devotion to the Church! He was fast being bound to her altars! Again the glorious spectacle of the Church triumphant in molding a wavering youth into a devoted son!

Four years passed thus, almost in silence on the boy's part. Yet his character suffered little change. At home he strove to avoid all mention of the career upon which he was entering, although he gave slight indication of dissatisfaction with it. He was punctilious in his attendance upon religious services; but to have been otherwise would have brought sorrow to his proud, happy parents. His days were spent in complete absorption in his books, or in writing in his journal. The latter he had begun shortly before entering the seminary, and it was destined to exert a profound influence upon his life. Often his parents would playfully urge him to read to them from it;

but the boy, devotedly obedient and filial in every other respect, steadfastly begged permission to refuse these requests. In this little whim the fond parents humored him, and he was left largely alone to his books and his meditations.

During José's fourth summer vacation a heavy sorrow suddenly fell upon him and plunged him into such an excess of grief that it was feared his mind would give way. His revered father, advanced in years, and weakened by overwork and business worries, succumbed to the malaria so prevalent in Seville during the hot months and passed away, after a brief illness. The blow descended with terrific force upon the morbidly disposed lad. It was his first intimate experience with death. For days after the solemn events of the mourning and funeral he sat as one stunned, holding his mother's hand and staring dumbly into space; or for hours paced to and fro in the little *patio,* his face rigidly set and his eyes fixed vacantly on the ground beneath. The work of four years in opening his mind, in expanding his thought, in drawing him out of his habitual reticence and developing within him the sense of companionship and easy tolerance, was at one stroke rendered null. Brought face to face with the grim destroyer, all the doubt and confusion of former years broke the bounds which had held them in abeyance and returned upon him with increased insistence. Never before had he felt so keenly the impotence of mortal man and the futility of worldly strivings. Never had he seen so clearly the fatal defects in the accepted interpretation of Christ's mission on earth. His earlier questionings returned in violent protests against the emptiness of the beliefs and formalities of the Church. In times past he had voiced vague and dimly outlined perceptions of her spiritual needs. But now to him these needs had suddenly taken definite form. Jesus had healed the sick of all manner of disease. He himself was being trained to represent the Christ on earth. Would he, too, be taught to heal the sick as the Master had done? The blessed Saviour said, "The works that I do, ye shall do also." But the priests, his representatives, clearly were not doing the works of the Master. And if he himself had been an ordained priest at the time of his father's death, could he have saved him? No, he well knew that he could not. And yet he would have been the Saviour's representative among men. Alas! how poor a one he well knew.

In his stress of mind he sought his uncle, and by him was again led before the Archbishop. His reticence and timidity dispersed by his great sorrow, the distraught boy faced the high ecclesiastic with questions terribly blunt.

"Why, my Father, after four years in the *Seminario,* am I

not being taught to do the works which our blessed Saviour did?"

The placid Archbishop stared at the boy in dumb astonishment. Again, after years of peace that had promised quiescence on these mooted points! Well, he must buckle on his armor —if indeed he had not outgrown it quite—and prepare to withstand anew the assaults of the devil!

"H'm!—to be specific, my son—you mean—?" The great man was sparring.

"Why do we not heal the sick as he did?" the boy explained tersely.

"Ah!" The peace-loving man of God breathed easier. How simple! The devil was firing a cracked blunderbuss.

"My son," he advanced with paternal unction, "you have been taught—or should have been, ere this—that the healing miracles of our blessed Saviour belong to a dispensation long past. They were special signs from God, given at the time of establishing His Church on earth, to convince an incredulous multitude. They are not needed now. *We* convince by logic and reason and by historical witnesses to the deeds of the Saints and our blessed Saviour." As he pronounced this sacred name the holy man devoutly crossed himself. "Men would believe no more readily to-day," he added easily, "even if they should see miracles of healing, for they would attribute them to the human mentality, to suggestion, hypnotism, hallucination, and the like. Even the mighty deeds of Christ were attributed to Beelzebub." The complacent Father settled back into his chair with an air of having disposed for all time of the mooted subject of miracles.

"That begs the question, my Father!" returned the boy quickly and excitedly. "And as I read church history it is thus that the question has been begged ever since the first century!"

"What!" The Archbishop was waxing hot. "Do you, a mere child of sixteen, dare to dispute the claims of Holy Church?"

"My Father," the boy spoke slowly and with awful earnestness, "I have been four years in the *Seminario.* I do not find the true Christ there; nor do I think I shall find him within the Church."

"Sanctissima Maria!" The Archbishop bounded to his feet. "Have you sold yourself to the devil?" he exploded. "Have you fed these years at the warm breasts of the Holy Mother, only to turn now and rend her? Have you become a Protester? Apostate and forsworn!"

"My Father," the boy returned calmly, "did Jesus tell the

truth—or did he lie? If he spoke truth, then I think he is *not* in the Church to-day. She has wholly misunderstood him—or else she—she deliberately falsifies."

The Archbishop sank gasping into his chair.

José went on. "You call me apostate and forsworn. I am neither. One cannot become apostate when he has never believed. As to being forsworn—I am a Rincón!"

The erect head and flashing eyes of the youth drew an involuntary exclamation of approval from the anxious secretary, who had stood striving to evolve from his befuddled wits some course adequate to the strained situation.

But the boy's proud bearing was only momentary. The wonted look of troubled wistfulness again settled over his face, and his shoulders bent to their accustomed stoop, as if his frail body were slowly crushing beneath a tremendous burden.

"My Father," he continued sadly, "do not the Gospels show that Jesus proved the truth of all he taught by doing the works which we call miracles? But does the Church to-day by any great works prove a single one of her teachings? You say that Christianity no longer needs the healing of the sick in order to prove its claims. I answer that, if so, it likewise no longer needs the preaching of the gospel, for I cannot find that Jesus made any distinction between the two. Always he coupled one with the other. His command was ever, 'Preach the gospel, heal the sick!' His works of healing were simply signs which showed that he understood what he taught. They were his proofs, and they followed naturally his great understanding of God. But what proofs do you offer when you ask mankind to accept your preaching? Jesus said, 'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.' If you do not do the works which he did, it shows plainly that you do not believe on him—that is, that you do not understand him. When I am an ordained priest, and undertake to preach the gospel to the world, must I confess to my people that I cannot prove what I am teaching? Must I confess that there is no proof within the Church? Is it not so, that true believers in Jesus Christ believe exactly in the proportion in which they obey him and do his works?"

The boy paused for breath. The Archbishop and his secretary sat spellbound before him. Then he resumed—

"How the consecrated wafer through the words of a priest becomes the real body of Christ, I am as yet unable to learn. I do not believe it does. How priests can grant absolution for sins when, to me, sins are forgiven only when they are forsaken, I have not been taught. I do not believe they can. The Church assumes to teach these things, but it cannot prove

them. From the great works of Jesus and his apostles it has descended to the blessing of *milagros* and candles, to the worship of the Virgin and man-made Saints, to long processions, to show and glitter—while without her doors the poor, the sick and the dying stretch out their thin, white hands and beseech her to save them, not from hell or purgatory in a supposed life to come, but from misery, want and ignorance right here in this world, as Jesus told his followers they should do. If you can show forth the omnipotence of God by healing the sick and raising the dead, I could accept that as proof of your understanding of the teachings of Jesus—and what you *really* understand you can demonstrate and teach to others. Theological questions used to bother me, but they do so no longer. Holy oil, holy water, blessed candles, incense, images and display do not interest me as they did when a child, nor do they any longer seem part of an intelligent worship of God. But"—his voice rising in animation—"to touch the blind man's eyes and see them open; to bid the leper be clean, and see his skin flush with health—ah! that is to worship God in spirit and in truth—that is to prove that you understand what Jesus taught and are obeying, not part, but *all* of his commands. I am not apostate"—he concluded sadly—"I never did fully believe that the religion of Jesus is the religion which the Church to-day preaches and pretends to practice. I do not believe in her heaven, her purgatory or her hell, nor do I believe that her Masses move God to release souls from torment. I do not believe in her powers to pardon and curse. I do not believe in her claims of infallibility. But—"

He hesitated a moment, as if not quite sure of his ground. Then his face glowed with sudden eagerness, and he cried, "My Father, the Church needs the light—do you not see it?—do you not, my uncle?" turning appealingly to the hard-faced secretary. "Can we not work to help her, and through her reach the world? Should not the Church rightly be the greatest instrument for good? But how can she teach the truth when she herself is so filled with error? How can she preach the gospel when she knows not what the gospel is? But Jesus said that if we obeyed him we should know of the doctrine, should know the true meaning of the gospel. But we must first obey. We must not only preach, but we must become spiritually minded enough to heal the sick—"

"*Dios nos guarde!*" interrupted the Archbishop, attempting to rise, but prevented by his secretary, who laid a restraining hand on his arm. The latter then turned to the overwrought boy.

"My dear José," he said, smiling patronizingly upon the

youth, although his cold eyes glittered like bits of polished steel, "His Eminence forgives your hasty words, for he recognizes your earnestness, and, moreover, is aware how deeply your heart is lacerated by your recent bereavement. But, further—and I say this in confidence to you—His Eminence and I have discussed these very matters to which you refer, and have long seen the need of certain changes within the Church which will redound to her glory and usefulness. And you must know that the Holy Father in Rome also recognizes these needs, and sees, too, the time when they will be met. However, his great wisdom prevents him from acting hastily. You must remember that our blessed Saviour suffered many things to be so for the time, although he knew they would be altered in due season. So it is with the Church. Her children are not all deep thinkers, like yourself, but are for the most part poor and ignorant people, who could not understand your high views. They must be led in ways with which they are familiar until they can be lifted gradually to higher planes of thought and conduct. Is it not so? You are one who will do much for them, my son—but you will accomplish nothing by attempting suddenly to overthrow the established traditions which they reverence, nor by publicly prating about the Church's defects. Your task will be to lead them gently, imperceptibly, up out of darkness into the light, which, despite your accusations, *does* shine in the Church, and is visible to all who rightly seek it. You have yet four years in the *Seminario*. You gave us your promise—the Rincón word—that you would lay aside these doubts and questionings until your course was completed. We do not hold you—*but you hold yourself to your word!* Our sincere advice is that you keep your counsel, and silently work with us for the Church and mankind. The Church will offer you unlimited opportunities for service. She is educating you. Indeed, has she not generously given you the very data wherewith you are enabled now to accuse her? You will find her always the same just, tolerant, wise Mother, leading her children upward as fast as they are able to journey. Her work is universal, and she is impervious to the shafts of envy, malice, and hatred which her enemies launch at her. She has resources of which you as yet know nothing. In the end she will triumph. You are offered an opportunity to contribute toward that triumph and to share in it. His Eminence knows that you will not permit Satan to make you reject that offer now."

The secretary's sharp, beady eyes looked straight into those of the youth, and held him. His small, round head, with its low brow and grizzled locks, waved snake-like on the man's long neck. His tall form, in its black cassock, bent over the

lad like a spectre. His slender arms, of uncanny length, waved constantly before him; and the long, bony fingers seemed to reach into the boy's very soul and choke the springs of life at their origin. His reasoning took the form of suggestion, bearing the indisputable stamp of authority. Again, the boy, confused and uncertain, bowed before years and worldly experience, and returned to his solitude and the companionship of his books and his writing.

"Occupy till I come," the patient Master had tenderly said. From earliest boyhood José had heard this clarion call within his soul. And striving, delving, plodding, he had sought to obey—struggling toward the distant gleam, toward the realization of something better and nearer the Master's thought than the childish creeds of his fellow-men—something warmer, more vital than the pulseless decrees of ecumenical councils—something to solve men's daily problems here on earth—something to heal their diseases of body and soul, and lift them into that realm of spiritual thinking where material pleasures, sensations, and possessions no longer form the single aim and existence of mankind, and life becomes what in reality it is, eternal ecstasy! The Christ had promised! And José would occupy and wait in faith until, with joy inexpressible, he should behold the shining form of the Master at the door of his opened tomb.

"With Your Eminence's permission I will accompany the boy back to Rome," the secretary said one day, shortly before José's return to the seminary. "I will consult with the Rector, and suggest that certain and special tutelage be given the lad. Let them bring their powers of reasoning and argument to bear upon him, to the end that his thinking may be directed into proper channels before it is too late. *Hombre!*" he muttered, as with head bent and hands clasped behind his back he slowly paced before the Archbishop. "To think that he is a Rincón! And yet, but sixteen—a babe—a mere babe!"

CHAPTER 7

IT must have been, necessarily, a very complex set of causes that could lay hold on a boy so really gifted as José de Rincón and, against his instincts and, on the part of those responsible for the deed, with the certain knowledge of his disinclination, urge him into the priesthood of a religious institution with which congenitally he had but little in common.

To begin with, the bigoted and selfish desires of his parents found in the boy's filial devotion a ready and sufficient means

of compelling him to any sacrifice of self. Only a thorough understanding of the Spanish temperament will enable one to arrive at a just estimate of José's character, and the sacredness of the promises given his mother. Though the child might pine and droop like a cankered rosebud, yet he would never cease to regard the sanctity of his oath as eternally binding. And the mother would accept the sacrifice, for her love for her little son was clouded by her great ambitions in respect to his earthly career, and her genuine solicitude for his soul's eternal welfare.

Family tradition, sacred and inviolable, played its by no means small part in this affair. Custom, now as inviolable as the Jewish law, decreed that the first-born son should sink his individuality into that of the Mother Church. And to the Spaniard, *costumbre* is law. Again, the vacillating and hesitant nature of the boy himself contributed largely to the result; for, though supremely gifted in receptivity and broadness of mind, in critical analysis and keenness of perception, he nevertheless lacked the energy of will necessary to the shaping of a life-course along normal lines. The boy knew what he preferred, yet he said *Amen* both to the prayers of his parents and the suggestions of doubt which his own mind offered. He was weakest where the greatest firmness was demanded. His love of study, his innate shrinking from responsibility, and his repugnance toward discord and strife—in a word, his lack of fighting qualities—naturally caused him to seek the lines of least resistance, and thus afforded a ready advantage to those who sought to influence him.

But why, it may be asked, such zeal on the part of the Archbishop and his secretary in forcing upon the boy a career to which they knew he was disinclined? Why should loyal agents of the Church so tirelessly urge into the priesthood one who might prove a serpent in her bosom?

The Archbishop may be dismissed from this discussion. That his motives were wholly above the bias of worldly ambition, we may not affirm. Yet we know that he was actuated by zeal for the Church; that he had its advancement, its growth in power and prestige always at heart. And we know that he would have rejoiced some day to boast, "We have saved to the Church a brilliant son who threatened to become a redoubtable enemy." The forces operating for and against this desideratum seemed to him about equally matched. The boy was still very young. His mind was as yet in the formative period, and would be for some years. If the Church could secure her hold upon him during this period she would doubtless retain it for all time; for, as the sagacious secretary so often quoted to his

superior, "Once a priest, always a priest," emphasizing the tenet that the character imprinted by ordination is ineffaceable.

As for the secretary, he was a Rincón, proud and bigoted, and withal fanatically loyal to the Church as an institution, whatever its or his own degree of genuine piety. It was deeply galling to his ecclesiastical pride to see the threatened development of heretical tendencies in a scion of his house. These were weeds which must and should be choked, cost what it might! To this end any means were justified, for "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And the Rincón soul had been molded centuries ago. The secretary hated the rapidly developing "scientific" spirit of the age and the "higher criticism" with a genuine and deadly hatred. His curse rested upon all modern culture. To him, the Jesuit college at Rome had established the level of intellectual freedom. He worshiped the landmarks which the Fathers had set, and he would have opposed their removal with his life. No, the Rincón traditions must be preserved at whatever cost! The heretical buddings within José should be checked; he should enter the priesthood; his thinking should be directed into proper channels; his mind should be bent into conformity with Holy Church! If not—but there was no alternative. The all-powerful Church could and would accomplish it.

In the choice of Rafaél de Rincón as secretary and assistant, the Archbishop had secured to himself a man of vast knowledge of ecclesiastical matters, of great acumen, and exceptional ability. The man was a Jesuit, and a positive, dynamic representative of all that the order stands for. He was now in his sixty-eighth year, but as vigorous of mind and body as if he bore but half his burden of age. For some years prior to his connection with the See of Seville he had served in the royal household at Madrid. But, presumably at the request of Queen Isabella, he had been peremptorily summoned to Rome some three years before her exile; and when he again left the Eternal City it was with the tentative papal appointment to Seville.

Just why Padre Rafaél had been relieved of his duties in Madrid was never divulged. But gossip supplied the paucity of fact with the usual delectable speculations, the most persistent of which had to do with the rumored birth of a royal child. The deplorable conduct of the Queen after her enforced marriage to Don Francisco D'Assis had thrown the shadow of suspicion on the legitimacy of all her children; and when it began to be widely hinted that Padre Rafaél, were he so disposed, might point to a humble cottage in the sunlit hills of Granada where lay a tiny *Infanta,* greatly resembling the

famous singer and favorite of the Queen, Marfori, Marquis de Loja, Isabella's alarm was sufficient to arouse the Vatican to action. With the removal of Padre Rafaél, and the bestowal of the *"Golden Rose of Faith and Virtue"* upon the Queen by His Holiness, Pio Nono, the rumor quickly subsided, and was soon forgotten.

Whether because of this supposed secret Padre Rafaél was in favor at the court of Pio Nono's successor, we may not say. The man's character was quite enigmatical, and divulged nothing. But, if we may again appeal to rumor, he did appear to have influence in papal circles. And we are not sure that he did not seek to augment that influence by securing his irresolute little nephew to the Church. And yet, the sincerity of his devotion to the papacy cannot be questioned, as witness his services to Pius IX., "the first Christian to achieve infallibility," during the troublesome years of 1870-71, when the French *débâcle* all but scuttled the papal ship of state. And if now he sought to use his influence at the Vatican, we shall generously attribute it to his loyalty to Rincón traditions, and his genuine concern for the welfare of the little José, rather than to any desire to advance his own ecclesiastical status.

But, it may be asked, during the eight years of José's course in the seminary, did his tutors not mark the forces at work in the boy's soul? And if so, why did they not urge his dismissal as unfit for the calling of the priesthood?

Because, true to his promises, and stubbornly hugging the fetish of family pride, the boy gave but little indication during the first four years of his course of the heretical doubts and disbeliefs fermenting within his troubled mind. And when, after the death of his father and its consequent release of the flood of protest and mental disquiet so long pent up within him, the uncle returned to Rome with the lad to advise his instructors to bring extra pressure to bear upon him in order to convince him of the truths upon which the Church rested, José subsided again into his wonted attitude of placid endurance, even of partial acceptance of the religious tutelage, and seldom gave further sign of inner discord. Acting upon the suggestions of the uncle, José's instructors took special pains to parade before him the evidence and authorities supporting the claims of Holy Church and the grand tenets upon which the faith reposed. In particular were the arguments of Cardinal Newman cited to him, and the study of the latter's Apology was made a requirement of his course. The writings of the great Cardinal Manning also were laid before him, and he was told to find therein ample support for all assumptions of the Church.

Silently and patiently the boy to outward appearance ac-

quiesced; but often the light of his midnight candle might have revealed a wan face, frowning and perplexed, while before him lay the Cardinal's argument for belief in the miraculous resuscitation of the Virgin Mary—the argument being that the story is a beautiful one, and a comfort to those pious souls who think it true!

Often, too, there lay before him the words of the great Newman:

> "You may be taken away young; you may live to fourscore; you may die in your bed, or in the open field—but if Mary intercedes for you, that day will find you watching and ready. All things will be fixed to secure your salvation, all dangers will be foreseen, all obstacles removed, all aid provided."

And as often he would close the book and drop his head in wonder that a man so humanly great could believe in an infinite, omnipotent God amenable to influence, even to that of the sanctified Mary.

"The Christ said, 'These signs shall follow them that believe,' " he sometimes murmured, as he sat wrapped in study. "But do the Master's signs follow the Cardinals? Yet these men say they believe. What can they do that other men can not? Alas, nothing! What boots their sterile faith?"

The limitations with which the lad was hedged about in the *Seminario* quite circumscribed his existence there. All lay influences were carefully excluded, and he learned only what was selected for him by his teachers. Added to this narrowing influence was his promise to his mother that he would read nothing proscribed by the Church. Of Bible criticism, therefore, he might know nothing. For original investigation of authorities there was neither permission nor opportunity. He was taught to discount historical criticism, and to regard anarchy as the logical result of independence of thought. He was likewise impressed with the fact that he must not question the official acts of Holy Church.

"But," he once remonstrated, "it was by an ecumenical council—a group of frail human beings—that the Pope was declared infallible! And that only a few years ago!"

"The council but set its seal of affirmation to an already great and established fact," was the reply. "As the supreme teacher and definer of the Church of God no Pope has ever erred, nor ever can err, in the exposition of revealed truth."

"But Tito Cennini said in class but yesterday that many of the Popes had been wicked men!"

"You must learn to distinguish, my son, between the man and the office. No matter what the private life of a Pope may

have been, the validity of his official acts is not thereby affected. Nor is the doctrine of the Church."

"But, —"

"Nay, my son; this is what the Church teaches; and to slight it is to emperil your soul."

But, despite his promises to his mother and the Archbishop, and in despite, too, of his own conscientious endeavor to keep every contaminating influence from entering his mind, he could not prevent this same Tito from assiduously cultivating his friendship, and voicing the most liberal and worldly opinions to him.

"*Perdio*, but you are an ignorant animal, José!" ejaculated the little rascal one day, entering José's room and throwing himself upon the bed. "Why, didn't you know that the Popes used to raise money by selling their pardons and indulgences? That fellow Tetzel, back in Luther's time, rated sacrilege at nine ducats, murder at seven, witchcraft at six, and so on. Ever since the time of Innocent VIII. immunity from purgatory could be bought. It was his chamberlain who used to say, 'God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he should pay and live.' Ha! ha! Those were good old days, *amico mio!*"

But the serious José, to whom honor was a sacred thing, saw not his companion's cause for mirth. "Tito," he hazarded, "our instructor tells us that we must distinguish—"

"Ho! ho!" laughed the immodest Tito, "if the Apostolic virtue has been handed down from the great Peter through the long line of Bishops of Rome and later Popes, what happened to it when there were two or three Popes, in the Middle Ages? And which branch retained the unbroken succession? Of a truth, *amico*, you are very credulous!"

José looked at him horrified.

"And which branch now," continued the irrepressible Tito, "holds a monoply of the Apostolic virtue, the Anglican Church, the Greek, or the Roman Catholic? For each claims it, and each regards its rival claimants as rank heretics."

José could not but dwell long and thoughtfully on this. Then, later, he again sought the graceless Tito. "*Amico,*" he said eagerly, "why do not these claimants of the true Apostolic virtue seek to prove their claims, instead of, like pouting children, vainly spending themselves in denouncing their rivals?"

"*Prove* them!" shouted Tito. "And how, *amico mio?*"

"Why," returned José earnestly, "by doing the works the Apostles did; by healing the sick, and raising the dead, and—"

Tito answered with a mocking laugh. "*Perdio, amico!* know you not that if they submitted to such proof not one of the various contestants could substantiate his claims?"

"Then, oh, then how could the council declare the Pope to be infallible?"

Tito regarded his friend pityingly. "My wonder is, *amico,*" he replied seriously, "that they did not declare him *immortal* as well. When you read the true history of those exciting days and learn something of the political intrigue with which the Church was then connected, you will see certain excellent reasons why the Holy Father should have been declared infallible. But let me ask you, *amico,* if you have such doubts, why are you here, of all places? Surely it is not your own life-purpose to become a priest!"

"My life-purpose," answered José meditatively, "is to find my soul—my *real* self."

Tito went away shaking his head. He could not understand such a character as that of José. But, for that matter, no one ever fathoms a fellow-being. And so we who have attempted a sketch of the boy's mentality will not complain if its complexity prevents us from adequately setting it forth. Rather shall we feel that we have accomplished much if we have shown that the lad had no slight justification for the budding seeds of religious doubt within his mind, and for concluding that of the constitution of God men know nothing, despite their fantastical theories and their bold affirmations, as if He were a man in their immediate neighborhood, with whom they were on the most intimate terms.

In the course of time José found the companionship of Tito increasingly unendurable, and so he welcomed the formation of another friendship among his mates, even though it was with a lad much older than himself, Bernardo Damiano, a candidate for ordination, and one thoroughly indoctrinated in the faith of Holy Church. With open and receptive heart our young Levite eagerly availed himself of his new friend's voluntary discourses on the mooted topics about which his own thought incessantly revolved.

"Fear not, José, to accept all that is taught you here," said Bernardo in kindly admonition; "for if this be not the very doctrine of the Christ himself, where else will you find it? Among the Protesters? Nay, they have, it is true, hundreds of churches; and they call themselves Christians. But their religion is as diverse as their churches are numerous, and it is not of God or Jesus Christ. They have impiously borrowed from us. Their emasculated creeds are only assumptions of human belief. They recognize no law of consistency, and so they enjoy unbridled license. They believe what they please, and each interprets Holy Writ to suit his own fantastical whims."

"But, the Popes—" began José, returning again to his troublesome topic.

"Yes, and what of them?" replied his friend calmly. "Can you not see beyond the human man to the Holy Office? The Holy Father is the successor of the great Apostle Peter, whom our blessed Saviour appointed his Vicar on earth, and constituted the supreme teacher and judge in matters of morals. Remember, *Jesus Christ founded the Catholic religion!* He established the Church, which he commanded all men to support and obey. That Church is still, and always will be, the infallible teacher of truth, for Jesus declared that it should never fall. Let not Satan lead you to the Protesters, José, for their creeds are but snares and pitfalls."

"I know nothing of Protestant creeds, nor want to," answered José. "If Jesus Christ established the Catholic religion, then I want to accept it, and shall conclude that my doubts and questionings are but the whisperings of Satan. But—"

"But what, my friend? The Popes again?" Bernardo laughed, and put his arm affectionately about the younger lad. "The Pope, José, is, always has been, and always will be, supreme, crowned with the triple crown as king of earth, and heaven, and hell. We mortals have not made him so. Heaven alone did that. God himself made our Pontiff of the Holy Catholic Church superior even to the angels; and if it were possible for them to believe contrary to the faith, he could judge them and lay the ban of excommunication upon them."

José's eyes widened while his friend talked. Was he losing his own senses? Or was it true, as his lamented father had said, that he had been cast under the spell of the devil's wiles? Had he been foreordained to destruction by his own heretical thought? For, if what he heard in Rome was truth, then was he damned, irrevocably!

"Come," said his friend, taking his arm; "let us go to the library and read the *Credo* of the Holy Father, Pius the Fourth, wherein is set forth in detail the doctrinal system of our beloved Church. And let me urge you, my dear young friend, to accept it, unreservedly, and be at peace, else will your life be a ceaseless torment."

Oh, that he could have done so! That he could have joined those thousands of faithful, loyal adherents to Holy Church, who find in its doctrines naught that stimulates a doubt, nor urges against the divine institution of its gorgeous, material fabric!

But, vain desire! "I cannot! I cannot!" he wailed in the dark hours of night upon his bed. "I cannot love a God who has to be prayed to by Saints and Virgin, and persuaded by them not to damn His own children! I cannot believe that the Pope, a mere human being, can canonize Saints and make spir-

itual beings who grant the prayers of men and intercede with God for them! Yes, I know there are multitudes of good people who believe and accept the doctrines of the Church. But, alas! I am not one of them, nor can be."

For, we repeat, the little José was morbidly honest. And this gave rise to fear, a corroding fear that he might not do right by his God, his mother, and himself, the three variants in his complex life-equation. His self-condemnation increased; yet his doubts kept pace with it. He more than ever distrusted his own powers after his first four years in the seminary. He more than ever lacked self-confidence. He was more than ever vacillating, hesitant, and infirm of purpose. He even at times, when under the pall of melancholia, wondered if he had really loved his deceased father, and whether it was real grief which he felt at his parent's demise. Often, too, when fear and doubt pressed heavily, and his companions avoided him because of the aura of gloom in which he dwelt, he wondered if he were becoming insane. He seemed to become obsessed with the belief that his ability to think was slowly paralyzing. And with it his will. And yet, proof that this was not the case was found in his stubborn opposition to trite acquiescence, and in his infrequent reversals of mood, when he would even feel an intense, if transient, sense of exaltation in the thought that he was doing the best that in him lay.

It was during one of these lighter moods, and at the close of a school year, that a great joy came to him in an event which left a lasting impress upon his life. Following close upon a hurried visit which his uncle paid to Rome, the boy was informed that it had been arranged for him to accompany the Papal Legate on a brief journey through Germany and England, returning through France, in order that he might gain a first-hand impression of the magnitude of the work which the Church was doing in the field, and meet some of her great men. The broadening, quieting, confidence-inspiring influence of such a journey would be, in the opinion of Padre Rafaél, incalculable. And so, with eager, bubbling hope, the lad set out.

Whatever it may have been intended that the boy should see on this ecclesiastical pilgrimage, he returned to Rome at the end of three months with his quick, impressionable mind stuffed with food for reflection. Though he had seen the glories of the Church, worshiped in her matchless temples, and sat at the feet of her great scholars, now in the quiet of his little room he found himself dwelling upon a single thought, into which all of his collected impressions were gathered: "The Church—Catholic and Protestant—is—oh, God, the Church is—not sick, not dying, but—*dead!* Aye, it has served both God

and Mammon, and paid the awful penalty! And what is left? *Caesarism!*" The great German and British nations were not Catholic. But worse, the Protestant people of the German Empire were sadly indifferent to religion. He had seen, in Berlin, men of family trying to resell the Bibles which their children had used in preparation for confirmation. He had found family worship all but extinct. He had marked the widespread indifference among Protestant parents in regard to the religious instruction of their young. He had been told there that parents had but a slight conception of their duty as moral guides, and that children were growing up with only sensuous pleasures and material gain as their life-aims. Again and again he was shown where in whole districts it was utterly impossible to secure young men for ordination to the Protestant ministry. And he was furnished with statistics setting forth the ominous fact that within a few years, were the present decline unchecked, there would be no students in the Protestant universities of the country.

"Do you not see in this, my son," said the Papal Legate, "the blight of unbelief? Do you not mark the withering effects of the modern so-called scientific thought? What think you of a religion wherein the chief interest centers in trials for heresy; whose ultimate effect upon human character is a return to the raw, primitive, immature sense of life that once prevailed among this great people? What think you now of Luther and his diabolical work?"

The wondering boy hung his head without reply. Would Germany at length come to the true fold? And was that fold the Holy Catholic Church?

And England—ah! there was the Anglican church, Catholic, but not Roman, and therefore but a counterfeit of the Lord's true Church. Would it endure? "No," the Legate had said; "already defection has set in, and the prodigal's return to the loving parent in Rome is but a matter of time."

Then came his visit to the great abbey of Westminster, and the impression which, to his last earthly day, he bore as one of his most sacred treasures. There in the famous Jerusalem Chamber he had sat, his eyes suffused with tears and his throat choked with emotion. In that room the first Lancastrian king long years before had closed his unhappy life. There the great Westminster Confession had been framed. There William of Orange had held his weighty discussion of the Prayer-Book revision, which was hoped to bring Churchmen and Dissenters again into harmony. And there, greatest of all, had gathered, day after day, and year after year, the patient, devoted group of men who gave to the world its Revised Edition of the Holy

Bible, only a few brief years ago. As the rapt José closed his eyes and listened to the whispered conversation of the scholarly men about him, he seemed to see the consecrated Revisers, seated again at the long table, deep in the holy search of the Scriptures for the profound secrets of life which they hold. He saw with what sedulous care they pursued their sacred work, without trace of prejudice or religious bias, and with only the selfless purpose always before them to render to mankind a priceless benefit in a more perfect rendition of the Word of God. Why could not men come together now in that same generous spirit of love? But no, Rome would never yield her assumptions. But when the lad rose and followed his guides from the room, it was with a new-born conviction, and a revival of his erstwhile firm purpose to translate for himself, at the earliest opportunity, the Greek Testament, if, perchance, he might find thereby what his yearning soul so deeply craved, the truth.

That the boy was possessed of scholarly instincts, there could be no doubt. His ability had immediately attracted his instructors on entering the seminary. And, but for his stubborn opposition to dogmatic acceptance without proofs, he might have taken and maintained the position of leader in scholarship in the institution. Literature and the languages, particularly Greek, were his favorite studies, and in these he excelled. Even as a child, long before the eventful night when his surreptitious reading of Voltaire precipitated events, he had determined to master Greek, and some day to translate the New Testament from the original sources into his beloved Castilian tongue. Before setting out for Rome he had so applied himself to the worn little grammar which the proprietor of the bookstall in Seville had loaned him, that he was able to make translations with comparative fluency. In the seminary he plunged into it with avidity; and when he returned from his journey with the Papal Legate he began in earnest his translation of the Testament. This, like so much of the boy's work and writing, was done secretly and in spare moments. And his zeal was such that often in the middle of the night it would compel him to rise and, after drawing the shades carefully and stopping the crack under the door with his cassock, light his candle and dig away at his Testament until dawn.

This study of the New Testament in the Greek resulted in many translations differing essentially from the accepted version, as could not but happen when a mind so original as that of the boy José was concentrated upon it. His first stumbling block was met in the prayer of Jesus in an attempt to render the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," into idiomatic modern thought. The word translated "daily" was not to be

found elsewhere in the Greek language. Evidently the Aramaic word which Jesus employed, and of which this Greek word was a translation, must have been an unusual one—a coined expression. And what did it mean? No one knows. José found means to put the question to his tutor. He was told that it doubtless meant "super-supernal." But what could "super-supernal" convey to the world's multitude of hungry suppliants for the bread of life! And so he rendered the phrase "Give us each day a better understanding of Thee." Again, going carefully through his Testament the boy crossed out the words translated "God," and in their places substituted "divine influence." Many of the best known and most frequently quoted passages suffered similarly radical changes at his hands. For the translation "truth," the boy often preferred to substitute "reality"; and such passages as "speaking the truth in love" were rendered by him, "lovingly speaking of those things which are real." "Faith" and "belief" were generally changed to "understanding" and "real knowing," so that the passage, "O ye of little faith," became in his translation, "O ye of slight understanding." The word "miracle" he consistently changed to "sign" throughout. The command to ask "in the name of Jesus" caused him hours of deep and perplexing thought, until he hit upon the, to him, happy rendering, "in his character." Why not? In the character of the Christ mankind might ask anything and it would be given them. But to acquire that character men must repent. And the Greek word "metanoia," so generally rendered "repentance," would therefore have to be translated "radical and complete change of thought." Again, why not? Was not a complete change of thought requisite if one were to become like Jesus? Could mortals think continually of murder, warfare, disaster, failure, crime, sickness and death, and of the acquisition of material riches and power, and still hope to acquire the character of the meek but mighty Nazarene? Decidedly no! And so he went on delving and plodding, day after day, night after night, substituting and changing, but always, even if unconsciously, giving to the Scripture a more metaphysical and spiritual meaning, which displaced in its translation much of the material and earthy.

Before the end of his seminary training the translation was complete. What a new light it seemed to throw upon the mission of Jesus! How fully he realized now that creeds and confessions had never even begun to sound the profound depths of the Bible! What a changed message it seemed to carry for mankind! How he longed to show it to his preceptors and discuss it with them! But his courage failed when he faced this thought. However, another expedient presented: he would

write a treatise on the New Testament, embodying the salient facts of his translation, and send it out into the world for publication in the hope that it might do much good. Again, night after night in holy zeal he toiled on the work, and when completed, sent it, under his name, to a prominent literary magazine published in Paris.

Its appearance—for it was accepted eagerly by the editor, who was bitterly hostile to the Church—caused a stir in ecclesiastical circles and plunged the unwise lad into a sea of trouble. The essay in general might have been excusable on its distinct merits and the really profound scholarship exhibited in its composition. But when the boy, a candidate for holy orders, and almost on the eve of his ordination, seized upon the famous statement of Jesus in which he is reported to have told Peter that he was the rock upon which the Lord's church should be eternally founded, and showed that Jesus called Peter a stone, *"petros,"* a loose stone, and one of many, whereas he then said that his church should be founded upon *"petra,"* the living, immovable rock of truth, thus corroborating Saint Augustine, but confuting other supposedly impregnable authority for the superiority and infallibility of the Church, it was going a bit too far.

The result was severe penance, coupled with soul-searing reprimand, and absolute prohibition of further original writing. His translation of the Testament was confiscated, and he was commanded to destroy all notes referring to it, and to refrain from making further translations. His little room was searched, and all references and papers which might be construed as unevangelical were seized and burned. He was then transferred to another room for the remainder of his seminary course, and given a roommate, a cynical, sneering bully of Irish descent, steeped to the core in churchly doctrine, who did not fail to embrace every opportunity to make the suffering penitent realize that he was in disgrace and under surveillance. The effect was to drive the sensitive boy still further into himself, and to augment the sullenness of disposition which had earlier characterized him and separated him from social intercourse with the world in which he moved apart from his fellow-men.

Thus had José been shown very clearly that implicit obedience would at all times be exacted from him by the Church. He had been shown quite unmistakably that an inquisitive and determined spirit would not be tolerated if it led to deductions at variance with accepted tradition. He might starve mentally, if his prescribed food did not satisfy his hunger; but he must understand, once for all, that truth had long since been revealed, and that it was not within his province to attempt any further additions to the revelation.

Once more, for the sake of his mother, and that he might learn all that the Church had to teach him, the boy conscientiously tried to obey. He was reminded again that, though taught to obey, he was being trained to lead. This in a sense pleased him, as offering surcease from an erking sense of responsibility. Nevertheless, though he constantly wavered in decision; though at times the Church won him, and he yielded temporarily to her abundant charms; the spirit of protest did wax steadily stronger within him as the years passed. Back and forth he swung, like a pendulum, now drawn by the power and influence of the mighty Church; now, as he approached it, repelled by the things which were revealed as he drew near. In the last two years of his course his soul-revolt often took the form of open protest to his preceptors against indulgences and the sacramental graces, against the arbitrary Index Expurgatorius, and the Church's stubborn opposition to modern progression. Like Faust, his studies were convincing him more and more firmly of the emptiness of human hypotheses and undemonstrable philosophy. The growing conviction that the Holy Church was more worldly than spiritual filled his shrinking soul at times with horror. The limiting thought of Rome was often stifling to him. He had begun to realize that liberty of thought and conscience were his only as he received it already outlined from the Church. Even his interpretation of the Bible must come from her. His very ideas must first receive the ecclesiastical stamp before he might advance them. His opinions must measure up—or down—to those of his tutors, ere he might even hold them. In terror he felt that the Church was absorbing him, heart and mind. His individuality was seeping away. In time he would become but a link in the great worldly system which he was being trained to serve.

These convictions did not come to him all at once, nor were they as yet firmly fixed. They were rather suggestions which became increasingly insistent as the years went on. He had entered the seminary at the tender age of twelve, his mind wholly unformed, but protesting even then. All through his course he had sought what there was in Christianity upon which he could lay firm hold. In the Church he had found an ultra-conservative spirit and extreme reverence for authority. Tito had told him that it was the equivalent of ancestor-worship. But when he one day told his instructors that he was not necessarily a disbeliever in the Scriptures because he did not accept their interpretation of them, he could not but realize that Tito had come dangerously near the truth. His translation of the Greek Testament had forced him to the conclusion that much of the material contained in the Gospels was not Jesus' own words,

but the commentaries of his reporters; not the Master's diction, but theological lecturing by the writers of the Gospels. Moreover, in the matter of prayer, especially, he was all at sea. As a child he had spent hours formulating humble, fervent petitions, which did not seem to draw replies. And so there began to form within his mind a concept, faint and ill-defined, of a God very different from that canonically accepted. He tried to believe that there was a Creator back of all things, but that He was inexorable Law. And the lad was convinced that, somehow, he had failed to get into harmony with that infinite Law. But, in that case, why pray to Law? And, most foolish of all, why seek to influence it, whether through Virgin or Saint? And, if God is a good Father, why ask Him to *be* good? Then, to his insistent question, *"Unde Deus?"* he tried to formulate the answer that God is Spirit, and omnipresent. But, alas! that made the good God include evil. No, there was a terrible human misunderstanding of the divine nature, a woeful misinterpretation. He must try to ask for light in the character of the Christ. But then, how to assume that character? Like a garment? Impossible! "Oh, God above," he wailed aloud again and again, "I don't know what to believe! I don't know what to think!" Foolish lad! Why did he think at all, when there were those at hand to relieve him of that onerous task?

And so, at last, José sought to resign himself to his fate, and, thrusting aside these mocking questions, accept the opportunities for service which his tutors so wisely emphasized as the Church's special offering to him. He yielded to their encouragement to plunge heartily into his studies, for in such absorption lay diversion from dangerous channels of thought. Slowly, too, he yielded to their careful insistence that he must suffer many things to be so for the nonce, even as Jesus did, lest a too radical resistance now should delay the final glorious consummation.

Was the boy actuated too strongly by the determination that his widowed mother's hopes should never be blasted by any assertion of his own will? Was he passively permitting himself to be warped and twisted into a minion of an institution alien to his soul in bigoted adherence to his morbid sense of integrity? Was he for the present countenancing a lie, rather than permit the bursting of a bomb which would rend the family and bring his beloved mother in sorrow to the grave? Or was he biding his time, an undeveloped David, who would some day sally forth like the lion of the tribe of Juda, to match his moral courage against the blustering son of Anak? Time only would tell. The formative period of his character was not yet ended, and the data for prognostication were too complex

and conflicting. We can only be sure that his consuming desire to know had been carefully fostered in the seminary, but in such a manner as unwittingly to add to his confusion of thought and to increase his fear of throwing himself unreservedly upon his own convictions. That he grew to perceive the childishness of churchly dogma, we know. That he appreciated the Church's insane license of affirmation, its impudent affirmations of God's thoughts and desires, its coarse assumptions of knowledge of the inner workings of the mind of Omnipotence, we likewise know. But, on the other hand, we know that he feared to break with the accepted faith. The claims of Protestantism, though lacking the pomp and pageantry of Catholicism to give them attractiveness, offered him an interpretation of Christ's mission that was little better than the teachings he was receiving. And so his hesitant and vacillating nature, which hurled him into the lists to-day as the resolute foe of dogma and superstition, and to-morrow would leave him weak and doubting at the feet of the enemy, kept him wavering, silent and unhappy, on the thin edge of resolution throughout the greater part of his course. His lack of force, or the holding of his force in check by his filial honesty and his uncertainty of conviction, kept him in the seminary for eight years, during which his being was slowly, imperceptibly descending into him. At the age of twenty he was still unsettled, but further than even he himself realized from Rome. Who shall say that he was not at the same time nearer to God?

On the day that he was twenty, three things of the gravest import happened to the young José. His warm friend, Bernardo, died suddenly, almost in his arms; his uncle, Rafaél de Rincón, paid an unexpected visit to the Vatican; and the lad received the startling announcement that he would be ordained to the priesthood on the following day.

The sudden demise of the young Bernardo plunged José into an excess of grief and again encompassed him with the fear and horror of death. He shut himself up in his room, and toward the close of the day took his writing materials and penned a passionate appeal to his mother, begging her to absolve him from his promises, and let him go out into the world, a free man in search of truth. But scarcely had he finished his letter when he was summoned into the Rector's office. There it was explained to him that, in recognition of his high scholarship, of his penitence and loyal obedience since the Testament episode, and of the advanced work which he was now doing in the seminary and the splendid promise he was giving, the Holy Father had been asked to grant a special indult, waiving the usual age requirement and permitting the boy to be ordained

with the class which was to receive the holy order of the priesthood the following day. It was further announced that after ordination he should spend a year in travel with the Papal Legate, and on his return might enter the office of the Papal Secretary of State, as an under-secretary, or office assistant. While there, he would be called upon to teach in the seminary, and later might be sent to the University to pursue higher studies leading to the degree of Doctor.

Before the boy had awakened to his situation, the day of his ordination arrived. The proud mother, learning from the secretary of the precipitation of events, and doting on the boy whom she had never understood; in total ignorance of the complex elements of his soul, and little realizing that between her and her beloved son there was now a gulf fixed which would never be bridged, saw only the happy fruition of a life ambition. Fortunately she had been kept in ignorance of the dubious incident of the Testament translation and its results upon the boy; and when the long anticipated day dawned her eyes swam in tears of hallowed joy. The Archbishop and his grim secretary each congratulated the other heartily, and the latter, breaking into one of his rare smiles, murmured gratefully, "At last! And our enemies have lost a champion!"

The night before the ordination José had begged to occupy a room alone. The appeal which emanated from his sad face, his thin and stooping body, his whole drawn and tortured being, would have melted flint. His request was granted. Throughout the night the boy, on his knees beside the little bed, wrestled with the emotions which were tearing his soul. Despondency lay over him like a pall. A vague presentiment of impending disaster pressed upon him like a millstone. Ceaselessly he weighed and reviewed the forces which had combined to drive him into the inconsistent position which he now occupied. Inconsistent, for his highest ideal had been truth. He was by nature consecrated to it. He had sought it diligently in the Church, and now that he was about to become her priest he could not make himself believe that he had found it. Now, when bound to her altars, he faced a life of deception, of falsehood, as the champion of a faith which he could not unreservedly embrace.

But he had accepted his education from the Church; and would he shrink from making payment therefor? Yet, on the other hand, must he sacrifice honor—yea, his whole future—to the payment of a debt forced upon him before he had reached the age of reason? The oath of ordination, the priest's oath, echoed in his throbbing ears like a soul-sentence to eternal doom; while spectral shades of moving priests and bishops, lay-

ing cold and unfeeling hands upon him, sealing him to endless servitude to superstition and deception, glided to and fro through the darkness before his straining eyes. Could he receive the ordination to-morrow? He had promised—but the assumption of its obligations would brand his shrinking soul with torturing falsehood! If he sank under doubt and fear, could he still retract? What then of his mother and his promise to her? What of the Rincón honor and pride? Living disgrace, or a living lie—which? Sacrifice of self—or mother? God knew, he had never deliberately countenanced a falsehood —yet, through circumstances which he did not have the will to control, he was a living one!

Fair visions of a life untrammeled by creed or religious convention hovered at times that night before his mental gaze. He saw a cottage, rose-bowered, glowing in the haze of the summer sun. He saw before its door a woman, fresh and fair—his wife —and children—his—shouting their joyous greetings as they trooped out to welcome him returning from his day's labors. How he clung to this picture when it faded and left him, an oath-bound celibate, facing his lonely and cheerless destiny! God! what has the Church to offer for such sacrifice as this! An education? Yea, an induction into relative truths and mortal opinions, and the sad record of the devious wanderings of the human mind! An opportunity for service? God knows, the free, unhampered mind, open to truth and progress, loosed from mediaeval dogma and ignorant convention, seeing its brothers' needs and meeting in them its own, has opportunities for rich service to-day outside the Church the like of which have never before been offered!

To and fro his heaving thought ebbed and flowed. Back and forth the arguments, pro and con, surged through the still hours of the night. After all, had he definite proof that the tenets of Holy Church were false? No, he could not honestly say that he had. The question still stood in abeyance. Even his conviction of their falsity at times had sorely wavered. And if his heart cried out against their acceptance, it nevertheless had nothing tangibly definite to offer in substitution. But—the end had come so suddenly! With his life free and untrammeled he might yet find the truth. Oath-bound and limited to the strictures of the Church, what hope was there but the acceptance of prescribed canons of human belief? Still, the falsities which he believed he had found within the Church were not greater than those against which she herself fought in the world. And if she accepted him, did it not indicate on her part a tacit recognition of the need of just what he had to offer, a searching spirit of inquiry and consecration to the unfoldment of truth? Alas!

the incident of the Greek translation threw its shadow of doubt upon that hope.

But if the Church accepted him, she *must* accept his stand! He *would* raise his voice in protest, and would continually point to the truth as he discerned it! If he received the order of priesthood from her it was with the understanding that his acceptance of her tenets was tentative! But—forlorn expedient! He knew something of ecclesiastical history. He thought he knew—young as he was—that the Church stood not for progress, not for conformity to changing ideals, not for alignment with the world's great reforms, but for *herself*, first, midst, and last!

Thus the conflict raged, while thoughts, momentous for even a mature thinker, tore through the mind of this lad of twenty. Prayers for light—prayers which would have rent the heart of an Ivan—burst at times from the feverish lips of this child of circumstance. Infinite Father—Divine Influence—Spirit of Love—whatever Thou art—wilt Thou not illumine the thought-processes of this distracted youth and thus provide the way of escape from impending destruction? Can it be Thy will that this fair mind shall be utterly crushed? Do the agonized words of appeal which rise to Thee from his riven soul fall broken against ears of stone?

"Occupy till I come!" Yea, beloved Master, he hears thy voice and strives to obey—but the night is filled with terror—the clouds of error lower about him—the storm bursts—and thou art not there!

Day dawned. A classmate, sent to summon the lad, roused him from the fitful sleep into which he had sunk on the cold floor. His mind was no longer active. Dumbly following his preceptors at the appointed hour, he proceeded with the class to the chapel. Dimly conscious of his surroundings, his thought befogged as if in a dream, his eyes half-blinded by the gray haze which seemed to hang before them, he celebrated the Mass, like one under hypnosis, received the holy orders, and assumed the obligations which constituted him a priest of Holy Church.

CHAPTER 8

ON a sweltering midsummer afternoon, a year after the events just related, Rome lay panting for breath and counting the interminable hours which must elapse before the unpitying sun would grant her a short night's respite from her discomfort. Her streets were deserted by all except those

whose affairs necessitated their presence in them. Her palaces and villas had been abandoned for weeks by their fortunate owners, who had betaken themselves to the seashore or to the more distance resorts of the North. The few inexperienced tourists whose lack of practical knowledge in the matter of globe-trotting had brought them into the city so unseasonably were hastily and indignantly assembling their luggage and completing arrangements to flee from their over-warm reception.

In a richly appointed suite of the city's most modern and ultra-fashionable hotel two maids, a butler, and the head porter were packing and removing a formidable array of trunks and suit cases, while a woman of considerably less than middle age, comely in person and tastefully attired in a loose dressing gown of flowered silk, alternated between giving sharp directions to the perspiring workers and venting her abundant wrath and disappointment upon the chief clerk, as with evident reluctance she filled one of a number of signed checks to cover the hotel expenses of herself and servants for a period of three weeks, although they had arrived only the day before and, on account of the stifling heat, were leaving on the night express for Lucerne. The clerk regretted exceedingly, but on Madam Ames' order the suite had been held vacant for that length of time, during which the management had daily looked for her arrival, and had received no word of her delay. Had Madam herself not just admitted that she had altered her plans *en route,* without notifying the hotel, and had gone first to the Italian lakes, without cancelling her order for the suite? And so her sense of justice must convince her that the management was acting wholly within its rights in making this demand.

While the preparations for departure were in progress the woman's two children played about the trunks and raced through the rooms and adjoining corridor with a child's indifference to climatal conditions.

"Let's ring for the elevator and then hide, Sidney!" suggested the girl, as she panted after her brother, who had run to the far end of the long hall.

"No, Kathleen, it wouldn't be right," objected the boy.

"Right! Ho! ho! What's the harm, goody-goody? Go tell mother, if you want to!" she called after him, as he started back to their rooms. Refusing to accompany him, the girl leaned against the balustrade of a stairway which led to the floor below and watched her brother until he disappeared around a turn of the corridor.

"Baby!" burst from her pouting lips. " 'Fraid of everything! It's no fun playing with him!" Then, casting a glance of inquiry

about her, "I'd just like to hide down these stairs. Mother and nurse never let me go where I want to."

Obeying the impulse stimulated by her freedom for the moment, the child suddenly turned and darted down the stairway. On the floor beneath she found herself at the head of a similar stairway, down which she likewise hurried, with no other thought than to annoy her brother, who was sure to be sent in search of her when her mother discovered her absence. Opening the door below, the child unexpectedly found herself in an alley back of the hotel.

Her sense of freedom was exhilarating. The sunlit alley beckoned to a delightful journey of discovery. With a happy laugh and a toss of her yellow curls she hurried along the narrow way and into the street which crossed it a short distance beyond. Here she paused and looked in each direction, uncertain which way to continue. In one direction, far in the distance, she saw trees. They looked promising; she would go that way. And trotting along the blazing, deserted street, she at length reached the grateful shade and threw herself on the soft grass beneath, tired and panting, but happy in the excitement of her little adventure.

Recovering quickly, the child rose to explore her environment. She was in one of those numerous public parks lining the Tiber and forming the city's playground for her less fortunate wards. Here and there were scattered a few people, mostly men, who had braved the heat of the streets in the hope of obtaining a breath of cool air near the water. At the river's edge a group of ragged urchins were romping noisily; and on a bench near them a young priest sat, writing in a notebook. As she walked toward them a beggar roused himself from the grass and looked covetously through his evil eyes at the child's rich clothes.

The gamins stopped their play as the girl approached, and stared at her in expectant curiosity. One of them, a girl of apparently her own age, spoke to her, but in a language which she did not understand. Receiving no reply, the urchins suddenly closed together, and holding hands, began to circle around her, shouting like little Indians.

The child stood for a moment perplexed. Then terror seized her. Hurling herself through the circle, she fled blindly, with the gamins in pursuit. With no sense of direction, her only thought to escape from the dirty band at her heels, she rushed straight to the river and over the low bank into the sluggish, yellow water. A moment later the priest who had been sitting on the bench near the river, startled by the frenzied cries of the now frightened children, rushed into the shallow water and brought the girl in safety to the bank.

Speaking to her in her own language, the priest sought to soothe the child and learn her identity as he carried her to the edge of the park and out into the street. But his efforts were unavailing. She could only sob hysterically and call piteously for her mother. A civil guard appeared at the street corner, and the priest summoned him. But scarcely had he reported the details of the accident when, suddenly uttering a cry, the priest thrust the girl into the arms of the astonished officer and fled back to the bench where he had been sitting. Another cry escaped him when he reached it. Throwing himself upon the grass, he searched beneath the bench and explored the ground about it. Then, his face blanched with fear, he rose and traversed the entire park, questioning every occupant. The gamins who had caused the accident had fled. The beggar, too, had disappeared. The park was all but deserted. Returning again to the bench, the priest sank upon it and buried his head in his hands, groaning aloud. A few minutes later he abruptly rose and, glancing furtively around as if he feared to be seen, hastened out to the street. Then, darting into a narrow cross-road, he disappeared in the direction of the Vatican.

At midnight, Padre José de Rincón was still pacing the floor of his room, frantic with apprehension. At the same hour, the small girl who had so unwittingly plunged him into the gravest danger was safely asleep in her mother's arms on the night express, which shrieked and thundered on its way to Lucerne.

CHAPTER 9

ALWAYS as a child José had been the tortured victim of a vague, unformed apprehension of impending disaster, a presentiment that some day a great evil would befall him. The danger before which he now grew white with fear seemed to realize that fatidic thought, and hang suspended above him on a filament more tenuous than the hair which held aloft the fabled sword of Damocles. That filament was the slender chance that the notebook with which he was occupied when the terrified child precipitated herself into the river, and which he had hastily dropped on seeing her plight and rushing to the rescue, had been picked up by those who would consider its value *nil* as an instrument of either good or evil. Before the accident occurred he had been absorbed in his writing and was unaware of other occupants of the park than himself and the children, whose boisterous romping in such close proximity had scarce interrupted his occupation. Then their frightened cries

roused him to an absorbing sense of the girl's danger. Nor did he think again of the notebook until he was relating the details of the accident to the guard at the edge of the park, when, like a blow from above, the thought of it struck him.

Trembling with dread anticipation, he had hurried back to the bench, only to find his fears realized. The book had disappeared! His frenzied search yielded no hint of its probable mode of removal. Overcome by a sickening sense of misfortune, he had sunk upon the bench in despair. But fear again roused him and drove him, slinking like a hunted beast, from the park—fear that the possessor of the book, appreciating its contents, but with no thought of returning it, might be hovering near, with the view of seeing what manner of priest it could be who would thus carelessly leave such writings as these in the public parks and within the very shadow of St. Peter's.

But to escape immediate identification as their author did not remove his danger. Their character was such that, should they fall into certain hands, his identity must surely be established. Even though his name did not appear, they abounded in references which could hardly fail to point to him. But, far worse, they cited names of personages high in political and ecclesiastical circles in references which, should they become public, must inevitably set in motion forces whose far-reaching and disastrous effects he dared not even imagine.

For the notebook contained the soul-history of the man. It was the *journal intime* which he had begun as a youth, and continued and amplified through succeeding years. It was the repository of his inmost thoughts, the receptacle of his secret convictions. It held, crystallized in writing, his earliest protests against the circumstances which were molding his life. It voiced the subsequent agonized outpourings of his soul when the holy order of priesthood was conferred upon him. It recorded his views of life, of religion, of the cosmos. It held in burning words his thoughts anent the Holy Catholic faith—his sense of its virtues, its weaknesses, its assumptions, its fallacies. It set forth his confession of helplessness before circumstances too strong for his feeble will, and it cited therewith, as partial justification for his conduct, his tender love for his mother and his firm intention of keeping forever inviolable his promises to her. It voiced his passionate prayers for light, and his dim hopes for the future, while portraying the wreck of a life whose elements had been too complex for him to sift and classify and combine in their normal proportions.

A year had passed since the unhappy lad had opened his mouth to receive the iron bit which Destiny had pressed so mercilessly against it. During that time the Church had con-

scientiously carried out her program as announced to him just prior to his ordination. Associated with the Papal Legate, he had traveled extensively through Europe, his impressionable mind avidly absorbing the customs, languages, and thought-processes of many lands. At Lourdes he had stood in deep meditation before the miraculous shrine, surrounded with its piles of discarded canes and crutches, and wondered what could be the principle, human or divine, that had effected such cures. In Naples he had witnessed the miraculous liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. He had seen the priests pass through the great assemblage with the little vial in which the red clot slowly dissolved into liquid before their credulous eyes; and he had turned away that they might not mark his flush of shame. In the Cathedral at Cologne he had gazed long at the supposed skulls of the three Magi who had worshiped at the rude cradle of the Christ. Set in brilliant jewels, in a resplendent gilded shrine, these whitened relics, which Bishop Reinald is believed to have discovered in the twelfth century, seemed to mock him in the very boldness of the pious fraud which they externalized. Was the mystery of the Christ involved in such deceit as this? And perpetrated by *his* Church? In unhappy Ireland he had been forced to the conviction that misdirected religious zeal must some day urge the sturdy Protesters of the North into armed conflict with their Catholic brothers of the South in another of those deplorable religious —nay, rather, *theological*—conflicts which have stained the earth with human blood in the name of the Prince of Peace. It was all incomprehensible to him, incongruous, and damnably wicked. Why could not they come together to submit their creeds, their religious beliefs and tenets, to the test of practical demonstration, and then discard those which world-history has long since shown inimical to progress and happiness? Paul urged this very thing when he wrote, "*Prove* all things; hold fast to that which is good." But, alas! the human doctrine of infallibility now stood squarely in the way.

From his travels with the Legate, José returned to Rome, burning with the holy desire to lend his influence to the institution of those reforms within the Church of which now he so clearly saw the need. Savonarola had burned with this same selfless desire to reform the Church from within. And his life became the forfeit. But the present age was perforce more tolerant; and was likewise wanting in those peculiar political conditions which had combined with the religious issue to send the great reformer to a martyr's death.

As José entered Rome he found the city in a state of turmoil. The occasion was the march of the Catholic gymnastic

associations from the church where they had heard the Mass to St. Peter's, where they were to be received by the Holy Father. Cries of "Long live free-thinking!" were issuing from the rabble which followed hooting in the wake of the procession. To these were retorted, "Viva il Papa Re!" José had been caught in the *mêlée*, and, but for the interference of the civil authorities, might have suffered bodily injury. With his corporeal bruises he now bore away another ineffaceable mental impression. Were the Italian patriots justified in their hostility toward the Vatican? Had United Italy come into existence with the support of the Papacy, or in despite of it? Would the Church forever set herself against freedom of thought? Always seek to imprison the human mind? Was her unreasonably stubborn attitude directly accountable for the presence of atheism in the place, of all places, where her own influence ought to be most potent, the city of St. Peter?

For reasons which he could only surmise—perhaps because of his high scholarship—perhaps because of his remarkable memory, which constituted him a living encyclopedia in respect of all that entered it—José was now installed in the office of the Papal Secretary of State as an office assistant. He had received the appointment with indifference, for he was wholly devoid of ecclesiastical ambition. And yet it was with a sense of relief that he now felt assured of a career in the service of the Administrative Congregation of the Church, and for all time removed from the likelihood of being relegated to the performance of merely priestly functions. He therefore prepared to bide his time, and patiently to await opportunities to lend his willing support to the uplift of the Church and his fellow-men.

The limitations with which he had always been hedged about had not permitted the lad to know much, if anything, of the multitude of books on religious and philosophical subjects annually published throughout the world; and his oath of obedience would have prevented him from reading them if he had. But he saw no reason why, as part preparation for his work of moral uplift, he should not continue to seek, at first hand, the answer to the world-stirring query, What does the Bible mean? If God gave it, if the theory of verbal inspiration is correct, and if it is infallible, why then was it necessary to revise it, as had been done in the wonderful Jerusalem Chamber which he had once visited? Were those of his associates justified who had scoffed at that work, and, with a sneer on their lips, voiced the caustic query, "Fools! Why don't they let the Bible alone?" If the world is to be instructed out of the old sensual theology, does the Bible contain the truth with which to

replace it? For to tear down an ideal without substituting for it a better one is nothing short of criminal. And so José plunged deeply into the study of Scriptural sources.

He had thought the rich treasures of the Vatican library unrestrictedly open to him, and he therefore brought his fine Latin and Greek scholarship to bear on its oldest uncial manuscripts. He began the study of Hebrew, that he might later read the Talmud and the ancient Jewish rabbinical lore. He pursued unflaggingly his studies of the English, French, and German languages, that he might search for the truth crystallized in those tongues. As his work progressed, the flush of health came to his cheeks. His eyes reflected the consuming fire which glowed in his eager soul. As he labored, he wrote; and his discoveries and meditations all found lodgment in his sole confidant, his journal.

If the Church knew what Christianity was, then José was forced to admit that he did not. He, weak, frail, fallible, *remit sins?* Preposterous! What was the true remission of sins but their utter destruction? He change the wafer and wine into the flesh and blood of Jesus? Nay, he was no spiritual thaumaturgus! He could not do even the least of the works of the Master, despite his priestly character! Yet, it was not he, but the Christ, operating through him as a channel, who performed the work. Then why did not the Christ through him heal the sick and raise the dead? "Nay," he deplored, as he bent over his task, "the Church may teach that the bones, the teeth, the hair, and other human relics of canonized Saints can heal the sick—but even the Cardinals and the Holy Father when they fall ill demand the services, not of these, but of earthly physicians. They seek not the Christ-healing then; nor can they by their boasted powers heal themselves."

Israel's theme was: Righteousness is salvation. But José knew not how to define righteousness. Surely it did not mean adherence to human creeds! It was vastly more than observance of forms! "God is a spirit," he read; "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Then, voicing his own comments, "Why, then, this crass materializing of worship? Are images of Saviour, Virgin, and Saint necessary to excite the people to devotion? Nay, would not the healing of the sick, the restoration of sight to the blind, and the performance of the works of the Master by us priests do more than wooden or marble images to lead men to worship? Proof! proof! proof! 'Show us your works, and we will show you our faith,' cry the people. 'Then will we no longer sacrifice our independence of thought to the merciless tyranny of human tradition.'" And he knew that this related to Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Mohammedan alike.

One day a Cardinal, passing through the library, saw the diligent student at work, and paused to inquire into his labors. "And what do you seek, my son?" was the kindly query of the aged churchman.

"Scriptural justification for the fundamental tenets of our faith," José replied quickly, carried away by his soul's animation.

"And you find it, without doubt?"

"Nay, Father, except through what is, to me, unwarranted license and assumption."

The Cardinal silently continued his way. But permission to translate further from the Vatican manuscripts was that day withdrawn from José.

Again the youth lapsed into his former habit of moody revery. Shackled and restless, driven anew into himself, he increasingly poured his turbulent thought into his journal, not for other and profane eyes to read—hardly, either, for his own reference—but simply because he *must* have some outlet for the expression of his heaving mind. He turned to it, as he had in other crises in his life, when his pent soul cried out for some form of relief. He began to revise the record of the impressions received on his travels with the Papal Legate. He recorded conversations and impressions of scenes and people which his abnormally developed reticence would not permit him to discuss verbally with his associates. He embodied his protests against the restrictions of ecclesiastical authority. And he noted, too, many a protest against the political, rather than religious, character of much of the business transacted in the office to which he was attached. In the discharge of his ordinary duties he necessarily became acquainted with much of the inner administrative polity of the Vatican, and thus at times he learned of policies which stirred his alien soul to revolt. In his inferior position he could not hope to raise his voice in protest against these measures which excited his indignation; but in the loneliness of his room, or on his frequent long walks after office hours, he was wont to brood over them until his mind became surcharged and found relief only in emptying itself into this journal. And often on summer days, when the intense heat rendered his little room in the dormitory uninhabitable, he would take his books and papers to some one of the smaller parks lining the Tiber, and there would lose himself in study and meditation and the recording of the ceaseless voicing of his lonely soul.

On this particular afternoon, however, his mind had been occupied with matters of more than ordinary import. It happened that a Bishop from the United States had arrived in

Rome the preceding day to pay his decennial visit to the Vatican and report on the spiritual condition of his diocese. While awaiting the return of the Papal Secretary, he had engaged in earnest conversation with a Cardinal-Bishop of the Administrative Congregation, in a small room adjoining the one where José was occupied with his clerical duties. The talk had been animated, and the heavy tapestry at the door had not prevented much of it from reaching the ears of the young priest and becoming fixed in his retentive memory.

"While I feel most keenly the persecution to which the Church must submit in the United States," the Bishop had said, "nevertheless Your Eminence will admit that there is some ground for complaint in the conduct of certain of her clergy. It is for the purpose of removing such vantage ground from our critics that I again urge an investigation of American priests, with the view of improving their moral status."

"You say, 'persecution to which the Church *must* submit.' Is that quite true?" returned the Cardinal-Bishop. "That is, in the face of your own gratifying reports? News from the American field is not only encouraging, but highly stimulating. The statistics which are just at hand from Monsignor, our Delegate in Washington, reveal the truly astonishing growth of our beloved cause for the restoration of all things in Christ. Has not God shown even in our beloved America that our way of worshiping Him is the way He approves?"

"But, Your Eminence, the constant defections! It was only last week that a priest and his entire congregation went over to the Episcopal faith. And—"

"What of that? 'It must needs be that offenses come.' Where one drops out, ten take his place."

"True, while we recruit our depleted ranks from the Old World. But, with restricted immigration—"

"Which is not restricted, as yet," replied the Cardinal-Bishop with a sapient smile. "Nor is there any restriction upon the inspiration, political as well as spiritual, which the American Government draws from Rome—an inspiration much more potent, I think, than our Protestant brethren would care to admit."

"Is that inspiration such, think you, as to draw the American Government more and more into the hands of the Church?"

"Its effect in the past unquestionably has been such," said the Cardinal-Bishop meditatively.

"And shall our dreams of an age be fulfilled—that the Holy Father will throw off the shackles which now hold him a prisoner within the Vatican, and that he will then personally direct the carrying out of those policies of world expansion which shall gather all mankind into the fold of Holy Church?"

"There is a lessening doubt of it," was the tentative reply.

"And—" the Bishop hesitated. "And—shall we say that those all-embracing policies ultimately will be directed by the Holy Father from Washington itself?"

A long pause ensued, during which José was all ears.

"Why not?" finally returned the Cardinal-Bishop slowly. "Why not, if it should better suit our purposes? It may become advisable to remove the Holy See from Rome."

"But—impossible!"

"Not at all—quite possible, though I will not say probable. But let us see, can we not say that the time has arrived when no President of the United States can be elected without the Catholic vote? Having our vote, we have his pledges to support our policies. These statistics before us show that already seventy-five per cent of all Government employes in Washington are of our faith. We control Federal, State, County and City offices without number. I think—I think the time is not distant when we shall be able to set up a candidate of our faith for the Presidency, if we care to. And," he mused, "we shall elect him. But, all in good time, all in good time."

"And is that," the Bishop interrogated eagerly, "what the Holy Father is now contemplating?"

"I cannot say that it is," answered the noncommittal Cardinal-Bishop. "But the Holy Father loves America. He rejoices in your report of progress in your diocese. The successes attained by Catholic candidates in the recent elections are most gratifying to him. This not only testifies to the progress of Catholicism in America, but is tangible proof of the growth of tolerance and liberal-mindedness in that great nation. The fact that the Catholic Mass is now being said in the American army affords further proof."

"Yes," meditated the Bishop. "Our candidates who receive election are quite generally loyal to the Church."

"And should constitute a most potent factor in the holy work of making America dominantly Catholic," added the older man.

"True, Your Eminence. And yet, this great desideratum can never come about until the youth are brought into the true fold. And that means, as you well know, the abolishing of the public school system."

"What think you of that?" asked the Cardinal-Bishop offhandedly.

The Bishop waxed suddenly animated. A subject had been broached which lay close to his heart. "The public schools constitute a godless sink of pollution!" he replied heatedly. "They are nurseries of vice! They are part of an immoral and

vicious system of education which is undermining the religion of American children! I have always contended that we, the Holy Catholic Church, *must* control education! I hold that education outside of the Church is heresy of the most damnable kind! We have heretofore weakly protested against this pernicious system, but without success, excepting"—and here he smiled cynically—"that we have very generally succeeded in forcing the discontinuance of Bible reading in the public schools. And in certain towns where our parochial schools do not instruct beyond the eighth grade, it looks as if we might force the introduction of a form of the Catholic Mass to be read each morning in the High School."

"Excellent!" exclaimed the Cardinal-Bishop. "Your voice thrills me like a trumpet call."

"I would it were such," cried the Bishop excitedly, "summoning the faithful to strike a blow which shall be felt! What right have the United States, or any nation, to educate the young? None whatever! Education belongs to the Church! Our rights in this respect have been usurped! But they shall be restored—if need be, at the point of the—"

"You positively make my old heart leap to the fray," interrupted the smiling, white-haired churchman. "But I feel assured that we shall accomplish just that without violence or bloodshed, my son. You echo my sentiments exactly on the pregnant question. And yet, by getting Catholics employed in the public schools as teachers, and by electing our candidates to public offices, we quietly accomplish our ends, do we not?"

"But when will the Holy Father recognize the time as propitious for a more decisive step in that respect?"

"Why, my son, I think you fail to see that we keep continually stepping. We are growing by leaps and bounds in America. At the close of the War of Independence the United States numbered some forty-five thousand adherents to the Catholic faith. Now the number has increased to twelve or fifteen millions. Of these, some four millions are voters. A goodly number, is it not?"

"Then," cried the Bishop, "let the Holy Father boldly make the demand that the States appropriate money for the support of our parochial schools!"

José's ears throbbed. Before his ordination he had heard the Liturgy for the conversion of America recited in the chapel of the seminary. And as often he had sought to picture the condition of the New World under the religio-political influence which has for centuries dominated the Old. But he had always dismissed the idea of such domination as wholly improbable, if not quite impossible in America. Yet, since coming into

the Papal Secretary's office, his views were slowly undergoing revision. The Church was concentrating on America. Of that there could be no doubt. Indeed, he had come to believe its success as a future world-power to be a function of the stand which it could secure and maintain in the United States. Now, as he strained his ears, he could hear the aged Cardinal-Bishop's low, tense words—

"There can be no real separation of Church and State. The Church is *not* inferior to the civil power, nor is it in any way dependent upon it. And the Church can never be excluded from educating and training the young, from molding society, from making laws, and governing, temporally and spiritually. From this attitude we shall *never* depart! Ours is the only true religion. England and Germany have been spiritually dead. But, praise to the blessed Virgin who has heard our prayers and made intercession for us, England, after long centuries of struggle with man-made sects and indefinite dogma, its spiritually-starving people fast drifting into atheism and infidelity because of nothing to hold to, has awakened, and in these first hours of her resurrection is fast returning to the Holy Church of Rome. America, in these latter days, is rousing from the blight of Puritanism, Protestantism, and their inevitable result, free-thinking and anarchy, and is becoming the brightest jewel in the Papal crown."

The Bishop smiled dubiously. "And yet, Your Eminence," he replied, "we are heralded from one end of the land to the other as a menace to Republican institutions."

"Ah, true. And you must agree that Romanism *is* a distinct menace to the insane license of speech and press. It is a decided menace to the insanity of Protestantism. But," he added archly, while his eyes twinkled, "I have no doubt that when Catholic education has advanced a little further many of your American preachers, editors, and Chautauqua demagogues will find themselves behind the bars of madhouses. Fortunately, that editor of the prominent American magazine of which you were speaking switched from his heretic Episcopal faith in time to avoid this unpleasant consequence."

The Bishop reflected for a moment. Then, deliberately, as if meditating the great import of his words, "Your Eminence, in view of our strength, and our impregnable position as God's chosen, cannot the Holy Father insist that the United States mails be barred against the infamous publications that so basely vilify our Church?"

"And thereby precipitate a revolution?" It was the firm voice of the Papal Secretary himself, who at that moment entered the room.

"But, Monsignor," said the Bishop, as he rose and saluted the newcomer, "how much longer must we submit to the gross injustice and indignities practiced upon us by non-believers?"

"As long as the infallible Holy Father directs," replied that eminent personage. "Obey him, as you would God himself," the Secretary continued. "And teach your flock to do likewise. The ballot will do for us in America what armed resistance never could. Listen, friend, my finger is on the religious pulse of the world. Nowhere does this pulse beat as strongly as in that part which we call the United States. For years I have been watching the various contending forces in that country, diligently and earnestly studying the elements acting and reacting upon our Church there. I have come to the conclusion that the success of Holy Church throughout the world depends upon its advance in the United States during the next few years. I have become an American enthusiast! The glorious work of making America Catholic is so fraught with consequences of vastest import that my blood surges with the enthusiasm of an old Crusader! But there is much still to be done. America is a field white for the harvest, almost unobstructed."

"Then," queried the Bishop, "you do not reckon Protestantism an obstruction?"

"Protestantism!" the Secretary rejoined with a cynical laugh. "No, I reckon it as nothing. Protestantism in America is decadent. It has split, divided, and disintegrated, until it is scarcely recognizable. Its adherents are falling away in great numbers. Its weak tenets and senile faith hold but comparatively few and lukewarm supporters. It has degenerated into a sort of social organization, with musicals, pink teas, and church suppers as attractions. No, America is *bound* to be classed as a Catholic nation—and I expect to live to see it thus. Our material and spiritual progress in the United States is amazing, showing how nobly American Catholics have responded to the Holy Father's appeal. New dioceses are springing up everywhere. Churches are multiplying with astonishing rapidity. The discouraging outlook in Europe is more, far more, than counterbalanced by our wonderful progress in the United States. We might say that the Vatican now rests upon American backs, for the United States send more Peter's Pence to Rome than all other Catholic countries together. We practically control her polls and her press. America was discovered by Christopher Columbus, a Catholic in the service of a Catholic ruler. It is Catholic in essence, and it shall so be recognized! The Holy Catholic Church always has been and always will be the sole and *only* Christian authority. The Catholic religion by rights ought to be, and ultimately shall be, the exclusively

dominant religion of the world, and every other sort of worship shall be banished—interdicted—destroyed!"

For a while José heard no more. His ears burned and his brain throbbed. He had become conscious of but one all-absorbing thought, the fact of his vassalage to a world-embracing political system, working in the name of the Christ. Not a new thought, by any means—indeed an old one, often held—but now driven home to him most emphatically. He forgot his clerical duties and sank into profound revery on his inconsistent position in the office of the highest functionary of Holy Church aside from the Supreme Pontiff himself.

He was aroused at length from his meditations by the departure of the American Bishop. "It is true, as you report," the Papal Secretary was saying earnestly. "America seems rife with modernism. Free-masonry, socialism, and countless other fads and religious superstitions are widely prevalent there. Nor do I underestimate their strength and influence. And yet, I fear them not. There are also certain freak religions, philosophical beliefs, wrung from the simple teachings of our blessed Saviour, the rapid spread of which at one time did give me some concern. The Holy Father mentioned one or two of them to-day, in reference to his contemplated encyclical on modernism. But I now see that they are cults based upon human personality; and with their leaders removed, the fabrics will of themselves crumble."

He took leave of the Bishop, and turned again to address the Cardinal-Bishop within. "A matter of the gravest import has arisen," he began in a low voice; "and one that may directly affect our negotiations in regard to the support which the Holy Father will need in case he issues a *pronunciamento* that France, Spain, and Austria shall no longer exercise the right of veto in papal elections. That rumor regarding Isabella's daughter is again afloat. I have summoned Father Rafaél de Rincón to Rome to state what he knows. But—" He rose and looked out through the door at José, bending over his littered desk. Then he went back, and resumed his conversation with the Cardinal-Bishop, but in a tone so low that José could catch only disconnected scraps.

"What, Colombia?" he at length heard the Cardinal-Bishop exclaim.

"Yes," was the Secretary's reply. "And presumably at the instigation of that busybody, Wenceslas Ortiz. Though what concern he might have in the *Infanta* is to me incomprehensible—assuming, of course, that there is such a royal daughter."

"But—Colombia elects a President soon, is it not so?"

"On the eve of election now," replied the Secretary. "And

if the influence of Wenceslas with the Bishop of Cartagena is what I am almost forced to admit that it is, then the election is in his hands. But, the *Infanta—*" The sound of his voice did not carry the rest of his words to José's itching ears.

An hour later the Secretary and the Cardinal-Bishop came out of the room and left the office together. "Yes," the Secretary was saying, "in the case of Wenceslas it was 'pull and percuniam' that secured him his place. The Church did not put him there."

The Cardinal-Bishop laughed genially. "Then the Holy Ghost was not consulted, I take it," he said.

"No," replied the Secretary grimly. "And he has so complicated the already delicate situation in Colombia that I fear Congress will table the bill prohibiting Free-masonry. It is to be deplored. Among all the Latin Republics none has been more thoroughly Catholic than Colombia."

"Is the Holy Father's unpublished order regarding the sale and distribution of Bibles loyally observed there?" queried the Cardinal-Bishop.

The door closed upon them and José heard no more. His day's duties ended, he went to his room to write and reflect. But the intense afternoon heat again drove him forth to seek what comfort he might near the river. With his notebook in hand he went to the little park, as was his frequent wont. An hour or so later, while he was jotting down his remembrance of the conversation just overheard, together with his own caustic and protesting opinions, his absorption was broken by the strange child's accident. A few minutes later the notebook had disappeared.

And now the thought of all this medley of personal material and secret matters of Church polity falling into the hands of those who might make capital of it, and thereby drag the Rincón honor through the mire, cast the man prostrate in the dust.

CHAPTER 10

DAYS passed—days whose every dawn found the priest staring in sleepless, wide-eyed terror at the ceiling above —days crowded with torturing apprehension and sickening suggestion—days when his knees quaked and his hands shook when his superiors addressed him in the performance of his customary duties. No mental picture was too frightful or abhorrent for him to entertain as portraying a possible consequence of the loss of his journal. He cowered in agony be-

fore these visions. He dared not seek the little park again. He feared to show himself in the streets. He dreaded the short walk from his dormitory to the Vatican. His life became a sustained torture—a consuming agony of uncertainty, interminable suspense, fearful foreboding. The cruelty of his position corroded him. His health suffered, and his cassock hung like a bag about his emaciated form.

Then the filament snapped and the sword fell. On a dismal, rainy morning, some two months after the incident in the park, José was summoned into the private office of the Papal Secretary of State. As the priest entered the small room the Secretary, sitting alone at his desk, turned and looked at him long and fixedly.

"So, my son," he said in a voice that froze the priest's blood, "you are still alive?" Then, taking up a paper-covered book of medium size which apparently he had been reading, he held it out without comment.

José took it mechanically. The book was crudely printed and showed evidence of having been hastily issued. It came from the press of a Viennese publisher, and bore the startling title, "Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest." As in a dream José opened it. A cry escaped him, and the book fell from his hands. *It was his journal!*

There are sometimes crises in human lives when the storm-spent mind, tossing on the waves of heaving emotion, tugs and strains at the ties which moor it to reason, until they snap, and it sweeps out into the unknown, where blackness and terror rage above the fathomless deep. Such a crisis had entered the life of the unhappy priest, who now held in his shaking hand the garbled publication of his life's most sacred thoughts. Into whose hands his notes had fallen on that black day when he had sacrificed everything for an unknown child, he knew not. How they had made their way into Austria, and into the pressroom of the heretical modernist who had gleefully issued them, twisted, exaggerated, but unabridged, he might not even imagine. The terrible fact remained that there in his hands they stared up at him in hideous mockery, his soul-convictions, his heart's deepest and most inviolable thoughts, details of his own personal history, secrets of state—all ruthlessly exposed to the world's vulgar curiosity and the rapacity of those who would not fail to play them up to the certain advantages to which they lent themselves all too well.

And there before him, too, were the Secretary's sharp eyes, burning into his very soul. He essayed to speak, to rise to his own defense. But his throat filled, and the words which he would utter died on his trembling lips. The room whirled about

him. Floods of memory began to sweep over him in huge billows. The conflicting forces which had culminated in placing him in the paradoxical position in which he now stood raced before him in confused review. Objects lost their definite outlines and melted into the haze which rose before his straining eyes. All things at last merged into the terrible presence of the Papal Secretary, as he slowly rose, tall and gaunt, and with arm extended and long, bony finger pointing to the yellow river in the distance, said in words whose cruel suggestion scorched the raw soul of the suffering priest:

"My son, be advised: the Tiber covers many sins."

Then pitying oblivion opened wide her arms, and the tired priest sank gently into them.

CHAPTER 11

ROME again lay scorching beneath a merciless summer sun. But the energetic uncle of José was not thereby restrained from making another hurried visit to the Vatican. What his mission was does not appear in papal records; but, like the one which he found occasion to make just prior to the ordination of his nephew, this visit was not extended to include José, who throughout that enervating summer lay tossing in delirium in the great hospital of the Santo Spirito. We may be sure, however, that its influence upon the disposition of the priest's case after the recent *dénoûment* was not inconsiderable, and that it was largely responsible for his presence before the Holy Father himself when, after weeks of racking fever, wan and emaciated, and leaning upon the arm of the confidential valet of His Holiness, the young priest faced that august personage and heard the infallible judgment of the Holy See upon his unfortunate conduct.

On the throne of St. Peter, in the heavily tapestried private audience room of the great Vatican prison-palace, and guarded from intrusion by armed soldiery and hosts of watchful ecclesiastics of all grades, sat the Infallible Council, the Vicar-General of the humble Nazarene, the aged leader at whose beck a hundred million faithful followers bent in lowly genuflection. Near him stood the Papal Secretary of State and two Cardinal-Bishops of the Administrative Congregation.

José dragged himself wearily before the Supreme Pontiff and bent low.

"*Benedicite,* my erring son." The soft voice of His Holiness floated not unmusically through the tense silence of the room.

"Arise. The hand of the Lord already has been laid heavily upon you in wholesome chastening for your part in this deplorable affair. And the same omnipotent hand has been stretched forth to prevent the baneful effects of your thoughtless conduct. We do not condemn you, my son. It was the work of the Evil One, who has ever found through your weaknesses easy access to your soul."

José raised his blurred eyes and gazed at the Holy Father in perplexed astonishment. But the genial countenance of the patriarch seemed to confirm his mild words. A smile, tender and patronizing, in which José read forgiveness—and yet with it a certain undefined something which augured conditions upon which alone penalty for his culpability would be remitted —lighted up the pale features of the Holy Father and warmed the frozen life-currents of the shrinking priest.

"My son," the Pontiff continued tenderly, "our love for our wandering children is but stimulated by their need of our protecting care. Fear not; the guilty publisher of your notes has been awakened to his fault, and the book which he so thoughtlessly issued has been quite suppressed."

José bent his head and patiently awaited the conclusion.

"You have lain for weeks at death's door, my son. The words which you uttered in your delirium corroborated our own thought of your innocence of intentional wrong. And now that you have regained your reason, you will confess to us that your reports, and especially your account of the recent conversation between the Cardinal-Secretary of State and the Cardinal-Bishop, were written under that depression of mind which has long afflicted you, producing a form of mental derangement, and giving rise to frequent hallucination. It is this which has caused us to extend to you our sympathy and protection. Long and intense study, family sorrow, and certain inherited traits of disposition, whose rapid development have tended to lack of normal mental balance, account to us for those deeds of eccentricity on your part which have plunged us into extreme embarrassment and yourself into the illness which threatened your young life. Is it not so, my son?"

The priest stared up at the speaker in bewilderment. This unexpected turn of affairs had swept his defense from his mind.

"The Holy Father awaits your reply," the Papal Secretary spoke with severity. His own thought had been greatly ruffled that morning, and his patience severely taxed by a threatened mutiny among the Swiss guards, whose demands in regard to the quantity of wine allowed them and whose memorial recounting other alleged grievances he had just flatly rejected. The muffled cries of *"Viva Garibaldi!"* as the petitioners left

his presence were still echoing in the Secretary's ears, and his anger had scarce begun to cool.

"We are patient, my Cardinal-Nephew," the Pontiff resumed mildly. "Our love for this erring son enfolds him." Then, turning again to José, "We have correctly summarized the causes of your recent conduct, have we not?"

The priest made as if to reply, but hesitated, with the words fluttering on his lips.

"My dear son"—the Holy Father bent toward the wondering priest in an attitude of loving solicitation—"our blessed Saviour was ofttimes confronted with those possessed of demons. Did he reject them? No; and, despite the accusations against us in your writings, for which we know you were not morally responsible, we, Christ's representative on earth, are still touched with his love and pity for one so unfortunate as you. With your help we shall stop the mouths of calumny, and set you right before the world. We shall use our great resources to save the Rincón honor which, through the working of Satan within you, is now unjustly besmirched. We shall labor to restore you to your right mind, and to the usefulness which your scholarly gifts make possible to you. We indeed rejoice that your piteous appeal has reached our ears. We rejoice to correct those erroneous views which you, in the temporary aberration of reason, were driven to commit to writing, and which so unfortunately fell into the hands of Satan's alert emissaries. Your ravings during these weeks of delirium shed much light upon the obsessing thoughts which plunged you into mild insanity. And they have stirred the immeasurable depths of pity within us."

The Holy Father paused after this unwontedly long speech. A dumb sense of stupefaction seemed to possess the priest, and he passed his shrunken hands before his eyes as if he would brush away a mist.

"That this unfortunate book is but the uttering of delirium, we have already announced to the world," His Holiness gently continued. "But out of our deep love for a family which has supplied so many illustrious sons to our beloved Church we have suppressed mention of your name in connection therewith."

The priest started, as he vaguely sensed the impending issue. What was it that His Holiness was about to demand? That he denounce his journal, over his own signature, as the ravings of a man temporarily insane? He was well aware that the Vatican's mere denial of the allegations therein contained, and its attributing of them to a mad priest, would scarcely carry conviction to the Courts of Spain and Austria,

or to an astonished world. But, for him to declare them the garbled and unauthentic utterances of an aberrant mind, and to make public such statement in his own name, would save the situation, possibly the Rincón honor, even though it stultify his own.

His Holiness waited a few moments for the priest's reply; but receiving none, he continued with deep significance:

"You will not make it necessary, we know, for us to announce that a mad priest, a son of the house of Rincón, now confined in an asylum, voiced these heretical and treasonable utterances."

The voice of His Holiness flowed like cadences of softest music, charming in its tenderness, winning in its appeal, but momentous in its certain implication.

"In our solicitude for your recovery we commanded our own physicians to attend you. To them you owe your life. To them, too, we owe our gratitude for that report on your case which reveals the true nature of the malady afflicting you."

The low voice vibrated in rhythmic waves through the dead silence of the room.

"To them also you now owe this opportunity to abjure the writings which have caused us and yourself such great sorrow; to them you owe this privilege of confessing before us, who will receive your recantation, remit your unintentional sins, and restore you to honor and service in our beloved Church."

José suddenly came to himself. Recant! Confess! In God's name, what? Abjure his writings, the convictions of a lifetime!

"These writings, my son, are not your sane and rational convictions," the Pontiff suggested.

José still stood mute before him.

"You renounce them now, in the clear light of restored reason; and you swear future lealty to us and to Holy Church," the aged Father continued.

"Make answer!" commanded one of the Cardinal-Bishops, starting toward the wavering priest. "Down on your knees before the Holy Father, who waits to forgive your venial sin!"

José turned swiftly to the approaching Cardinal and held up a hand. The man stopped short. The Pontiff and his associates bent forward in eager anticipation. The valet fell back, and José stood alone. In that tense mental atmosphere the shrinking priest seemed to be transformed into a Daniel.

"No, Holy Father, you mistake!" His voice rang through the room like a clarion. "I do not recant! My writings *do* express my deepest and sanest convictions!"

The Pontiff's pallid face went dark. The eyes of the other

auditors bulged with astonishment. A dumb spell settled over the room.

"Father, my guilt lies not in having recorded my honest convictions, nor in the fact that these records fell into the hands of those who eagerly grasp every opportunity to attack their common enemy, the Church. It lies rather in my weak resistance to those influences which in early life combined to force upon me a career to which I was by temperament and instinct utterly disinclined. It lies in my having sacrificed myself to the selfish love of my mother and my own exaggerated sense of family pride. It lies in my still remaining outwardly a priest of the Catholic faith, when every fiber of my soul revolts against the hypocrisy!"

"You are a subject of the Church!" the Papal Secretary interrupted. "You have sworn to her and to the Sovereign Pontiff as loyal and unquestioning obedience as to the will of God himself!"

José turned upon him. "Before my ordination," he cried, "I was a voluntary subject of the Sovereign of Spain. Did that ceremony render me an unwilling subject of the Holy Father? Does the ceremony of ordination constitute the Romanizing of Spain? No, I am not a subject of Rome, but of my conscience!"

Another dead pause followed, in which for some moments nothing disturbed the oppressive silence. José looked eagerly into the delicate features of the living Head of the Church. Then, with decreased ardor, and in a voice tinged with pathos, he continued:

"Father, my mistakes have been only such as are natural to one of my peculiar character. I came to know, but too late, that my life-motives, though pure, found not in me the will for their direction. I became a tool in the hands of those stronger than myself. For what ultimate purpose, I know not. Of this only am I certain, that my mother's ambitions, though selfish, were the only pure motives among those which united to force the order of priesthood upon me."

"Force!" burst in one of the Cardinal-Bishops. "Do you assume to make the Holy Father believe that the priesthood can be *forced* upon a man? You assumed it willingly, gladly, as was your proper return for the benefits which the Mother Church had bestowed upon you!"

"In a state of utmost confusion, bordering a mental breakdown, I assumed it—outwardly," returned the priest sadly, "but my heart never ceased to reject it. Once ordained, however, I sought in my feeble way to study the needs of the Church, and prepare myself to assist in the inauguration of reforms which I felt she must some day undertake."

The Pontiff's features twitched with ill-concealed irritation at this confession; but before he could speak José continued:

"Oh, Father, and Cardinal-Princes of the Church, does not the need of your people for truth wring your hearts? Turn from your zealous dreams of world-conquest and see them, steeped in ignorance and superstition, wretched with poverty, war, and crime, extending their hands to you as their spiritual leaders—to you, Holy Father, who should be their Moses, to smite the rock of error, that the living, saving truth may gush out!"

He paused, as if fearful of his own rushing thought. Then: "Is not the past fraught with lessons of deepest import to us? Is not the Church being rejected by the nations of Europe because of our intolerance, our oppression, our stubborn clinging to broken idols and effete forms of faith? We are now turning from the wreckage which the Church has wrought in the Old World, and our eyes are upon America. But can we deceive ourselves that free, liberty-loving America will bow her neck to the mediaeval yoke which the Church would impose upon her? Why, oh, why cannot we see the Church's tremendous opportunities for good in this century, and yield to that inevitable mental and moral progression which must sweep her from her foundations, unless she conform to its requirements and join in the movement toward universal emancipation! Our people are taught from childhood to be led; they are willing followers—none more willing in the world! But why lead them into the pit? Why muzzle them with fear, oppress them with threats, fetter them with outworn dogma and dead creed? Why continue to dazzle them with pagan ceremonialism and oriental glamour, and then, our exactions wrung from them, leave them to consume with disease and decay with moral contagion?"

"The man is mad with heresy!" muttered the Pontiff, turning to the Cardinal-Bishops.

"No, it is not I who is mad with heresy, but the Holy Church, of which you are the spiritual Head!" cried the priest, his loud voice trembling with indignation and his frail body swaying under his rapidly growing excitement. "She is guilty of the damnable heresy of concealing knowledge, of hiding truth, of stifling honest questionings! She is guilty of grossest intolerance, of deadliest hatred, of impurest motives—she, the self-constituted, self-endowed spiritual guide of mankind, arrogating to herself infallibility, superiority, supreme authority—yea, the very voice of God himself!"

The priest had now lost all sense of environment, and his voice waxed louder as he continued:

"The conduct of the Church throughout the centuries has made her the laughing stock of history, an object of ridicule to every man of education and sense! She is filled with superstition—do you not know it? She is permeated with pagan idolatry, fetishism, and carnal-mindedness! She is pitiably ignorant of the real teachings of the Christ! Her dogmas have been formed by the subtle wits of Church theologians. They are in this century as childish as her political and social schemes are mischievous! Why have we formulated our doctrine of purgatory? Why so solicitous about souls in purgatorial torment, and yet so careless of them while still on earth? Where is our justification for the doctrine of infallibility? Is liberty to think the concession of God, or of the Holy Father? Where, oh, where is the divine Christ in our system of theology? Is he to be found in materialism, intolerance, the burning of Bibles, in hatred of so-called heretics, and in worldly practices? Are we not keeping the Christ in the sepulcher, refusing to permit him to arise?"

His speech soared into the impassioned energy of thundered denunciation.

"Yes, Holy Father, and Cardinal-Bishops, I *am* justified in criticizing the Holy Catholic Church! And I am likewise justified in condemning the Protestant Church! All have fallen woefully short of the glory of God, and none obeys the simple commands of the Christ. The Church throughout the world has become secularized, and worship is but hollow consistency in the strict performance of outward acts of devotion. Our religion is but a hypocritical show of conformity. Our asylums, our hospitals, our institutions of charity? Alas! they but evidence our woeful shortcoming, and our persistent refusal to rise into the strength of the healing, saving Christ, which would render these obsolete institutions unnecessary in the world of to-day! The Holy Catholic Church is but a human institution. Its worldliness, its scheming, its political machinations, make me shudder—!"

"Stop, madman!" thundered one of the Cardinal-Bishops, rushing upon the frail José with such force as to fell him to the floor. The Pontiff had risen, and sunk again into his chair. The valet hurried to his assistance. The Papal Secretary, his face contorted with rage, and his throat choking with the press of words which he strove to utter, hastened to the door to summon help. "Remove this man!" he commanded, pointing out the prostrate form of José to the two Swiss guards who had responded to his call. "Confine him! He is violent—a raging maniac!"

A few days later, Padre José de Rincón, having been pro-

nounced by the Vatican physicians mentally deranged, as the result of acute cerebral anaemia, was quietly conveyed to a sequestered monastery at Palazzola.

* * * * * *

Two summers came, and fled again before the chill winds which blew from the Alban hills. Then one day José's uncle appeared at the monastery door with a written order from His Holiness, effecting the priest's conditional release. Together they journeyed at once to Seville, the uncle alert and energetic as ever, showing but slight trace of time's devastating hand; José, the shadow of his former self physically, and his mind clouded with the somber pall of melancholia.

Toward the close of a quiet summer, spent with his mother in his boyhood home, José received from his uncle's hand another letter, bearing the papal insignia. It was evident that it was not unexpected, for it found the priest with his effects packed and ready for a considerable journey. A hurried farewell to his mother, and the life-weary José, combining innocence and misery in exaggerated proportions, and still a vassal of Rome, set out for the port of Cadiz. There, in company with the Apostolic Delegate and Envoy Extraordinary to the Republic of Colombia, he embarked on the West Indian trader Sarnia, bound for Cartagena, in the New World.

CHAPTER 12

THERE is no region in the Western Hemisphere more invested with the spirit of romance and adventure than that strip of Caribbean coast stretching from the Cape of Yucatan to the delta of the Orinoco and known as the Spanish Main. No more superb setting could have been chosen for the opening scenes of the New World drama. Skies of profoundest blue—the tropical sun flaming through massive clouds of vapor—a sea of exuberant color, foaming white over coral beaches—waving cocoa palms against a background of exotic verdure marking a tortuous shore line, which now rises sheer and precipitous from the water's edge to dizzy, snowcapped, cloud-hung heights, now stretches away into vast reaches of oozy mangrove bog and dank cinchona grove—here flecked with stagnant lagoons that teem with slimy, crawling life—there flattened into interminable, forest-covered plains and untrodden, primeval wildernesses, impenetrable, defiant, alluring—and all perennially bathed in dazzling light, vivid color, and soft, fragrant winds—with everywhere redundant foliage—humming, chat-

tering, screaming life—profusion—extravagance—prodigality —riotous waste! Small wonder that when this enticing shore was first revealed to the astonished *Conquistadores*, where every form of Nature was wholly different from anything their past experience afforded, they were childishly receptive to every tale, however preposterous, of fountains of youth, of magical lakes, or enchanted cities with mountains of gold in the depths of the frowning jungle. They had come with their thought attuned to enchantment; their minds were fallow to the incredible; they were fresh from their conquest of the vast *Mare Tenebrosum*, with its mysteries and terrors. At a single stroke from the arm of the intrepid Genoese the mediaeval superstitions which peopled the unknown seas had fallen like fetters from these daring and adventurous souls. The slumbering spirit of knight-errantry awoke suddenly within their breasts; and when from their frail galleons they beheld with ravished eyes this land of magic and alluring mystery which spread out before them in such gorgeous panorama, they plunged into the glittering waters with waving swords and pennants, with shouts of praise and joy upon their lips, and inaugurated that series of prodigious enterprise, extravagant deeds of hardihood, and tremendous feats of prowess which still remain unsurpassed in the annals of history for brilliancy, picturesqueness, and wealth of incident.

With almost incredible rapidity and thoroughness the Spanish arms spread over the New World, urged by the corroding lust of gold and the sharp stimulus afforded by the mythical quests which animated the simple minds of these hardy searchers for the Golden Fleece. Neither trackless forests, withering heat, miasmatic climate nor savage Indians could dampen their ardor or check their search for riches and glory. They penetrated everywhere, steel-clad and glittering, with lance and helmet and streaming banner. Every nook, every promontory of a thousand miles of coast was minutely searched; every island was bounded; every towering mountain scaled. Even those vast regions of New Granada which to-day are as unknown as the least explored parts of darkest Africa became the scenes of stirring adventure and brilliant exploit of these daring crusaders of more than three centuries ago.

The real wonders yielded by this newly discovered land of enchantment far exceeded the fabled Manoa or El Dorado of mythical lore; and the adventurous expeditions that were first incited by these chimeras soon changed into practical colonizing and developing projects of real and permanent value. Amazing discoveries were made of empires which had already developed a state of civilization, mechanical, military, and

agricultural, which rivaled those of Europe. Natural resources were revealed such as the Old World had not even guessed were possible. Great rivers, vast fertile plains, huge veins of gold and copper ore, inexhaustible timber, a wealth of every material thing desired by man, could be had almost without effort. Fortunate, indeed, was the Spanish *Conquistador* in the possession of such immeasurable riches; fortunate, indeed, had he possessed the wisdom to meet the supreme test of character which this sudden accession of wealth and power was to bring!

With the opening of the vast treasure house flanked by the Spanish Main came the Spaniard's supreme opportunity to master the world. Soon in undisputed possession of the greater part of the Western Hemisphere; with immeasurable wealth flowing into his coffers; sustained by dauntless courage and an intrepid spirit of adventure; with papal support, and the learning and genius of the centuries at his command, he faced the opportunity to extend his sway over the entire world and unite all peoples into a universal empire, both temporal and spiritual. That he failed to rise to this possibility was not due to any lack of appreciation of his tremendous opportunity, nor to a dearth of leaders of real military genius, but to a misapprehension of the great truth that the conquest of the world is not to be wrought by feats of arms, but by the exercise of those moral attributes and spiritual qualities of heart and soul which he did not possess—or possessing, had prostituted to the carnal influences of lust of material riches and temporal power.

In the immediate wake of the Spanish *Conqueros* surged the drift and flotsam of the Old World. Cities soon sprang up along the Spanish Main which reflected a curious blend of the old-time life of Seville and Madrid with the picturesque and turbulent elements of the adventurer and buccaneer. The spirit of the West has always been synonymous with a larger sense of freedom, a shaking off of prejudice and tradition and the trammels of convention. The sixteenth century towns of the New World were no exception, and their streets and *plazas* early exhibited a multicolored panorama, wherein freely mingled knight and predaceous priest, swashbuckler and staid *hidalgo,* timid Indian and veiled *doncella*—a potpourri of merchant, prelate, negro, thief, the broken in fortune and the blackened in character—all poured into the melting pot of the new West, and there steaming and straining, scheming and plotting, attuned to any pitch of venturesome project, so be it that gold and fame were the promised emoluments thereof.

And gold, and fame of a certain kind, were always to be had by those whose ethical code permitted of a little straining. For the great ships which carried the vast wealth of this new land

of magic back to the perennially empty coffers of Old Spain constituted a temptation far more readily recognized than resisted. These huge, slow-moving galleons, gilded and carved, crawling lazily over the surface of the bright tropical sea, and often so heavily freighted with treasure as to be unsafe in rough weather, came to be regarded as special dispensations of Providence by the cattle thieves and driers of beef who dwelt in the pirates' paradise of Tortuga and Hispaniola, and little was required in way of soul-alchemy to transform the *boucanier* into the lawless and sanguinary, though picturesque, corsair of that romantic age. The buccaneer was but a natural evolution from the peculiar conditions then obtaining. Where human society in the process of formation has not yet arrived at the necessity of law to restrain the lust and greed of its members; and where at the same time untold wealth is to be had at the slight cost of a few lives; and, too, where even the children are taught that whosoever aids in the destruction of Spanish ships and Spanish lives renders a service to the Almighty, the buccaneer must be regarded as the logical result. He multiplied with astonishing rapidity in these warm, southern waters, and not a ship that sailed the Caribbean was safe from his sudden depredations. So extensive and thorough was his work that the bed of the Spanish Main is dotted with traditional treasure ships, and to this day remnants of doubloons or "pieces of eight" and bits of bullion and jewelry are washed up on the shining beaches of Panamá and northern Colombia as grim memorials of his lawless activities.

The expenditure of energy necessary to transport the gold, silver and precious stones from the New World to the bottomless treasury of Spain was stupendous. Yet not less stupendous was the amount of treasure transported. From the distant mines of Potosí, from the Pilcomayo, from the almost inaccessible fastnesses of what are now Bolivia and Ecuador, a precious stream poured into the leaking treasure box of Spain that totalled a value of no less than ten billion dollars. Much of the wealth which came from Peru was shipped up to the isthmus of Panamá, and thence transferred to plate-fleets. But the buccaneers became so active along the Pacific coast that water shipment was finally abandoned, and from that time transportation had to be made overland by way of the Andean plateau, sometimes a distance of two thousand miles, to the strongholds which were built to receive and protect the treasure until the plate-fleets could be made up. Of these strongholds there were two of the first importance, the old city of Panamá, on the isthmus, and the almost equally old city of Cartagena, on the northern coast of what is now the Republic of Colombia.

The spirit of ancient Carthage must have breathed upon this "Very Royal and Loyal City" which Pedro de Heredia in the sixteenth century founded on the north coast of New Granada, and bequeathed to it a portion of its own romance and tragedy. Superbly placed upon a narrow, tongue-shaped islet, one of a group that shield an ample harbor from the sharp tropical storms which burst unheralded over the sea without; girdled by huge, battlemented walls, and guarded by frowning fortresses, Cartagena commanded the gateway to the exhaustless wealth of the *Cordilleras*, at whose feet she still nestles, bathed in perpetual sunshine, and kissed by cool ocean breezes which temper the winds blowing hot from the steaming *llanos* of the interior. By the middle of the sixteenth century she offered all that the adventurous seeker of fame and fortune could desire, and attracted to herself not only the chivalry, but the beauty, wealth and learning which, mingled with rougher elements, poured into the New World so freely in the opening scenes of the great drama inaugurated by the arrival of the tiny caravels of Columbus a half century before.

The city waxed quickly rich and powerful. Its natural advantages of location, together with its massive fortifications, and its wonderful harbor, so extensive that the combined fleets of Spain might readily have found anchorage therein, early rendered it the choice of the Spanish monarch as his most dependable reservoir and shipping point for the accumulated treasure of his new possessions. The island upon which the city arose was singularly well chosen for defense. Fortified bridges were built to connect it with the mainland, and subterranean passageways led from the great walls encircling it to the impregnable fortress of San Felipe de Barajas, on Mount San Lázaro, a few hundred yards back of the city and commanding the avenues and approaches of the land side. To the east, and about a mile from the walls, the abrupt hill of La Popa rises, surmounted by the convent of Santa Candelaria, likewise connected by underground tunnels to the interior of the city, and commanding the harbor and its approaches from the sea. The harbor formerly connected with the open sea through two entrances, the Boca Grande, a wide, fortified pass between the island of Tierra Bomba and the tongue on which the city stands, and the Boca Chica, some nine miles farther west, a narrow, tortuous pass, wide enough to permit entry to but a single vessel at a time, and commanded by forts San Fernando and San José.

By the middle of the seventeenth century Cartagena, "Queen of the Indies and Queen of the Seas," had expanded into a proud and beautiful city, the most important mart of the New World.

Under royal patronage its merchants enjoyed a monopoly of commerce with Spain. Under the special favor of Rome it became an episcopal See, and the seat of the Holy Inquisition. Its docks and warehouses, its great centers of commerce, its sumptuous dwellings, its magnificent Cathedral, its colleges and monasteries, and its proud aristocracy, all reflected the spirit of enterprise which animated its sons and found expression in a city which could boast a pride, a culture, and a wealth almost unrivalled even in the Old World.

But, not unlike her ancient prototype, Cartagena succumbed to the very influences which had made her great. Her wealth excited the cupidity of freebooters, and her power aroused the jealousy of her formidable rivals. Her religion itself became an excuse for the plundering hands of Spain's enemies. Again and again the city was called upon to defend the challenge which her riches and massive walls perpetually issued. Again and again she was forced to yield to the heavy tributes and disgraceful penalties of buccaneers and legalized pirates who, like Drake, came to plunder her under royal patent. Cartagena rose and fell, and rose again. But the human heart which throbs beneath the lash of lust or revenge knows no barriers. Her great forts availed nothing against the lawless hordes which swarmed over them. Neither were her tremendous walls proof against starvation. Again and again, her streets filled with her gaunt dead, she stubbornly held her gates against the enemies of Spain who assaulted her in the name of religion, only at last to weaken with terror and throw them open in disgraceful welcome to the French de Pontis and his maudlin, rag-tag followers, who drained her of her last drop of life blood. As her gates swung wide and this nondescript band of marauders streamed in with curses and shouts of exultation, the glory of this royal mediaeval city passed out forever.

Almost from its inception, Cartagena had been the point of attack of every enterprise launched with the object of wresting from Spain her rich western possessions, so much coveted by her jealous and revengeful rivals. It was Spain herself who fought for very existence while Cartagena was holding her gates against the enemies of Holy Church. And these enemies knew that they had pierced the Spanish heart when the "Queen of the Indies" fell. And in no small measure did Spain deserve the fate which overtook her. For, had it not been for the stupendous amount of treasure derived from these new possessions, the dramatic and dominant part which she played in the affairs of Europe during the sixteenth century would have been impossible. This treasure she wrested from her South American colonies at a cost in the destruction of human life, in the

outraging of human instincts, in the debauching of ideals and the falsifying of hope, in hellish oppression and ghastly torture, that can never be adequately estimated. Her benevolent instruments of colonization were cannon and saintly relics. Her agents were swaggering soldiers and bigoted friars. Her system involved the impression of her language and her undemonstrable religious beliefs upon the harmless aborigines. The fruits of this system, which still linger after three centuries, are superstition, black ignorance, and woeful mental retardation. To the terrified aborigines the boasted Spanish civilization meant little more than "gold, liquor, and sadness." Small wonder that the simple Indians, unable to comprehend the Christian's lust for gold, poured the molten metal down the throats of their captives, crying, "Eat, Christian, eat!" They had borrowed their ideals from the Christian Spaniards, who by means of the stake and rack were convincing them that God was not in this western land until they came, bringing their debauched concept of Christianity.

And so Cartagena fell, late in the seventeenth century, never to regain more than a shadow of her former grandeur and prestige. But again she rose, in a semblance of her martial spirit, when her native sons, gathering fresh courage and inspiration from the waning powers of the mother-country in the early years of the century just closed, organized that federation which, after long years of almost hopeless struggle, lifted the yoke of Spanish misrule from New Granada and proclaimed the Republic of Colombia. Cartagena was the first city of Colombia to declare its independence from Spain. And in the great war which followed the "Heroic City" passed through terrible vicissitudes, emerging from it still further depleted and sunken, a shell of massive walls and battered defenses, with desolated homes and empty streets echoing the tread of the mendicant *peon*.

As the nineteenth century, so rich in invention, discovery, and stirring activity in the great States to the north, drew to a close, a chance visitor to this battle-scarred, mediaeval city would have found her asleep amid the dreams of her former greatness. Approaching from the harbor, especially if he arrived in the early hours of morning, his eyes would have met a view of exquisite beauty. Seen thus, great moss-grown structures rise from within the lofty encircling walls, with many a tower and gilded dome glittering in the clear sunlight and standing out in sharp relief against the green background of forest-plumed hills and towering mountains. The abysmal blue of the untainted tropical sky overhead contrasts sharply with the red-tiled roofs and dazzling white exteriors of the

buildings beneath; and the vivid tints, mingling with the iridescence of the scarcely rippling waters of the harbor, blend into a color scheme of rarest loveliness in the clear atmosphere which seems to magnify all distant objects and intensify every hue.

A closer approach to the citadel which lies within the landlocked harbor reveals in detail the features of the stupendous walls which guard this key to Spain's former treasure house. Their immensity and their marvelous construction bear witness to the genius of her famous military engineers, and evoke the same admiration as do the great temples and monuments of ancient Egypt. These grim walls, in places sixty feet through, and pierced by numerous gates, are frequently widened into broad esplanades, and set here and there with bastions and watch towers to command strategic points. At the north end of the city they expand into an elaborately fortified citadel, within which are enormous fresh water tanks, formerly supplied by the rains, and made necessary by the absence of springs so near the coast. Within the walls at various points one finds the now abandoned barracks, storerooms, and echoing dungeons, the latter in the days of the stirring past too often pressed into service by the Holy Inquisition. Underground tunnels, still intact, lead from the walls to the Cathedral, the crumbling fortress of San Felipe de Barajas, and the deserted convent on the summit of La Popa. Time-defying, grim, dramatic reliques of an age forever past, breathing poetry and romance from every crevice—still in fancy echoing from moldering tower and scarred bulwark the clank of sabre, the tread of armored steed, and the shouts of exulting *Conquistadores* —aye, their ghostly echoes sinking in the fragrant air of night into soft whispers, which bear to the tropical moon dark hints of ancient tragedies enacted within these dim keeps and gloom-shrouded tunnels!

The pass of Boca Grande—"large mouth"—through which Drake's band of marauders sailed triumphantly in the latter part of the sixteenth century, was formerly the usual entrance to the city's magnificent harbor. But its wide, deep channel, only two miles from the city walls, afforded too easy access to undesirable visitors in the heyday of freebooters; and the harassed Cartagenians, wearied of the innumerable piratical attacks which this broad entrance constantly invited, undertook to fill it up. This they accomplished after years of heroic effort and an enormous expenditure of money, leaving the harbor only the slender, tortuous entrance of Boca Chica—"little mouth"—dangerous to incoming vessels because of the almost torrential flow of the tide through it, but much more readily

defended. The two castles of San Fernando and San José, frowning structures of stone dominating this entrance, have long since fallen into disuse, but are still admirably preserved. Beneath the former, and extending far below the surface of the water, is the old Bastile of the Inquisition, occasionally pressed into requisition now to house recalcitrant politicians, and where no great effort of the imagination is required still to hear the groans of the tortured and the sighs of the condemned, awaiting in chains and *san benitos* the approaching *auto da fé*.

But the greater distance from the present entrance of the harbor to the city walls affords the visitor a longer period in which to enjoy the charming panorama which seems to drift slowly out to meet him as he stands entranced before it. The spell of romance and chivalry is upon him long ere he disembarks; and once through the great gateway of the citadel itself, he yields easily to the ineluctable charm which seems to hover in the balmy air of this once proud city. Everywhere are evidences of ancient grandeur, mingling with memories of enormous wealth and violent scenes of strife. The narrow, winding streets, characteristic of oriental cities; the Moorish architecture displayed in the grandiose palaces and churches; the grated, unglazed windows, through which still peep timid *señoritas*, as in the romantic days of yore; the gaily painted balconies, over which bepowdered *doncellas* lean to pass the day's gossip in the liquid tongue of Cervantes, all transport one in thought to the chivalrous past, when this picturesque survival of Spain's power in America was indeed the very Queen of the western world and the proud boast of the haughty monarchs of Castile.

Nor was the city more dear to the Spanish King than to the spiritual Sovereign who sat on Peter's throne. The Holy See strove to make Cartagena the chief ecclesiastical center of the New World; and churches, monasteries, colleges, and convents flourished there as luxuriantly as the tropical vegetation. The city was early elevated to a bishopric. A magnificent Cathedral was soon erected, followed by other churches and buildings to house ecclesiastical orders, including the Jesuit college, the University, the women's seminary, and the homes for religious orders of both sexes. The same lavish expenditure of labor and wealth was bestowed upon the religious structures as on the walls and fortifications. The Cathedral and the church of San Juan de Dios, the latter the most conspicuous structure in the city, with its double towers and its immense monastery adjoining, became the special recipients of the liberal outpourings of a community rich not only in material wealth, but in culture and refinement as well. The latter church in particular

was the object of veneration of the patrons of America's only Saint, the beneficent Pedro Claver, whose whitened bones now repose in a wonderful glass coffin bound with strips of gold beneath its magnificent marble altar. In the central *plaza* of the city still stands the building erected to house the Holy Inquisition, so well preserved that it yet serves as a dwelling. Adjacent to it, and lining the *plaza*, are spacious colonial edifices, once the homes of wealth and culture, each shaded by graceful palms and each enclosing its inner garden, or *patio*, where tropical plants and aromatic shrubs riot in richest color and fragrance throughout the year.

In the halcyon days of Cartagena's greatness, when, under the protection of the powerful mother-country, her commerce extended to the confines of the known world, her streets and markets presented a scene of industry and activity wholly foreign to her in these latter days of her decadence. From her port the rich traffic which once centered in this thriving city moved, in constantly swelling volume, in every direction. In her marts were formulated those audacious plans which later took shape in ever-memorable expeditions up the Magdalena and Cauca rivers in search of gold, or to establish new colonies and extend the city's sphere of influence. From her gates were launched those projects which had for their object the discovery of the mysterious regions where rivers were said to flow over sands of pure gold and silver, or the kingdom of El Dorado, where native potentates sprinkled their bodies with gold dust before bathing in the streams sacred to their deities. From this city the bold Quesada set out on the exploits of discovery and conquest which opened to the world the rich plateau of Bogotá, and ranked him among the greatest of the *Conquistadores*. In those days a canal had been cut through the swamps and dense coast lowlands to the majestic Magdalena river, some sixty-five miles distant, where a riverine town was founded and given the name of Calamar, the name Pedro de Heredia had first bestowed upon Cartagena. Through this *dique* the city's merchant vessels passed to the great arterial stream beyond, and thence some thousand miles south into the heart of the rich and little known regions of upper Colombia. To-day, like the grass-grown streets of the ancient city, this canal, choked with weeds and *débris*, is but a green and turbid pool, but yet a reminder of the faded glory of the famous old town which played such a dramatic *rôle* in that age of desperate courage.

In the finished town of Cartagena Spain's dreams of imperial pomp and magnificence were externalized. In her history the tragedy of the New World drama has been preserved. To-day, sunk in decadence, surrounded by the old mediaeval flavor, and

steeped in the romance of an age of chivalry forever past, her muniments and donjons, her gray, crenelated walls and time-defying structures continue to express that dogged tenacity of belief and stern defiance of unorthodox opinion which for two hundred years maintained the Inquisition within her gates and sacrificed her fair sons and daughters to an undemonstrable creed. The heavy air of ecclesiasticism still hangs over her. The priests and monks who accompanied every sanguinary expedition of the *Conquistadores*, ready at all times to absolve any desperado who might slay a harmless Indian in the name of Christ, have their successors to-day in the astute and untiring sons of Rome, who conserve the interests of Holy Church within these battered walls and guard their portals against the entrance of radical thought. Heredia had scarcely founded the city when King Philip sent it a Bishop. And less than a decade later the Cathedral, which to-day stands as the center of the episcopal See, was begun.

The Cathedral, though less imposing than the church of San Juan de Dios, is a fine example of the ecclesiastical architecture of the colonial era. Occupying a central position in the city, its ever-open doors invite rich and poor alike, citizen and stranger, to enter and linger in the refreshing atmosphere within, where the subdued light and cool shadows of the great nave and chapels afford a grateful respite from the glare and heat of the streets without. Massive in exterior appearance, and not beautiful within, the Cathedral nevertheless exhibits a construction which is at once broad, simple and harmonious. The nave is more than usually wide between its main piers, and its rounded arches are lofty and well proportioned. Excellent portraits of former Bishops adorn its white walls, and narrow rectangular windows at frequent intervals admit a dim, mellow light through their dark panes. Before one of these windows—apparently with no thought of incongruity in the exhibition of such a gruesome object attached to a Christian church—there has been affixed an iron grating, said to have served the Holy Inquisition as a gridiron on which to roast its heretical victims. Within, an ambulatory, supported on the first tier of arches, affords a walk along either side of the nave, and leads to the winding stairway of the bell tower. At one end of this ambulatory, its entrance commanding a full view of the nave and the *capilla mayor*, with its exquisitely carved marble altar, is located the Bishop's *sanctum*. It was here that the young Spanish priest, José de Rincón, stood before the Bishop of Cartagena on the certain midday to which reference was made in the opening chapter of this recital, and received with dull ears the ecclesiastical order which removed him still farther from the world and

doomed him to a living burial in the crumbling town of Simití, in the wilderness of forgotten Guamocó.

CHAPTER 13

"AT last, you come!"

The querulous tones of the aged Bishop eddied the brooding silence within the Cathedral. Without waiting for a reply he turned again to his table and took up a paper containing a list of names.

"You wait until midday," he continued testily; "but you give me time to reflect and decide. The parish of Simití has long been vacant. I have assigned you to it. The Honda touches at Calamar to-morrow, going up-river. You will take it."

"Simití! Father—!"

"Bien; and would you dispute this too!" quavered the ill-humored Bishop.

"But—Simití—you surely cannot mean—!"

The Bishop turned sharply around. "I mean that after what I learn from Rome I will not keep you here to teach your heresies in our University! I mean that after what I hear this morning of your evil practices I will not allow you to spend another day in Cartagena!" The angry ecclesiastic brought his bony fist hard against the table to emphasize the remark.

"Madre de Dios!" he resumed, after some moments of nursing his choleric feelings. "Would you debate further! The Holy Father for some unexplained reason inflicts a madman upon me! And I, innocent of what you are, obey his instructions and place you in the University—with what result? You have the effrontery—the madness—to lecture to your classes on the heresies of Rome!"

"But—"

"And as if that were not burden enough for these old shoulders, I must learn that I have taken a serpent to my bosom—but that you are still sane enough to propagate heresies—to plot revolution with the Radicals—and—shame consume you!—to wantonly ruin the fair daughters of our diocese! But, do you see now why I send you where you can do less evil than here in Cartagena?"

The priest slowly petrified under the tirade.

"The fault is not mine if I must act without instruction from Rome," the Bishop went on petulantly. "Twice have I warned you against your teachings—but I did not suspect then, for only yesterday did I learn that before coming to me you had been

confined in a monastery—insane! But—*Hombre!* when you bring the blush of shame to my cheeks because of your godless practices—it is time to put you away without waiting for instruction!"

Godless practices! Was the Bishop or the priest going mad?

"Go now to your room," the Bishop added, turning again to his table. "You have little enough time to prepare for your journey. Wenceslas will give you letters to the Alcalde of Simití."

Wenceslas! The priest's thought flew back over the events of the morning. Marcelena—Maria—the encounter below with —! *Dios!* Could it be that Wenceslas had fastened upon him the stigma of his own crime? The priest found his tongue.

"Father!—it is untrue!—these charges are false as hell!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I demand to know who brings them against me!"

The testy Bishop's wrath flared up anew. "You demand! Am I to sit here and be catechised by *you?* It is enough that I know what occurs in my diocese, and am well informed of your conduct!"

The doorway darkened, and the priest turned to meet the object of his suspecting thought.

Bestowing a smile of patronage upon José, and bowing obsequiously before the Bishop, Wenceslas laid some papers upon the table, remarking as he did so, "The letters, Your Grace, to introduce our José to his new field. Also his instructions and expense money."

"Wenceslas!" The priest confronted him fiercely. "Do you accuse me before the Bishop?"

"Accuse, *amigo?*" Wenceslas queried in a tone of assumed surprise. "Have I not said that your ready tongue and pen are your accusers? But," with a conciliatory air, "we must remember that our good Bishop mercifully views your conduct in the light of your recent mental affliction, traces of which, unfortunately, have lingered to cause him sorrow. And so he graciously prepares a place for you, *caro amigo,* where rest and relief from the strain of teaching will do you much good, and where life among simple and affectionate people will restore you, he hopes, to soundness of mind."

The priest turned again to the Bishop in a complexity of appeal. The soft speech of Wenceslas, so full of a double *entendu,* so markedly in contrast with the Bishop's harsh but at least sincere tirade, left no doubt in his mind that he was now the victim of a plot, whose ramifications extended back to the confused circumstances of his early life, and the doubtful purposes of his uncle and his influence upon the sacerdotal direc-

tors in Rome. And he saw himself a helpless and hopelessly entangled victim.

"Father!" In piteous appeal José held out his hands to the Bishop, who had turned his back upon him and was busy with the papers on his table.

"Amigo, the interview is ended," said Wenceslas quietly, stepping between the priest and his superior.

José pushed wildly past the large form of Wenceslas and seized the Bishop's hand.

"Santa Maria!" cried the petulant churchman. "Do you obey me, or no? If not, then leave the Church—and spend your remaining days as a hounded ex-priest and unfrocked apostate," he finished significantly. "Go, prepare for your journey!"

Wenceslas slipped the letter and a few *pesos* into the hand of the smitten, bewildered José, and turning him to the door, gently urged him out and closed it after him.

* * * * * *

Just why the monastery gates had opened to him after two years' deadening confinement, José had not been apprised. All he knew was that his uncle had appeared with a papal appointment for him to the University of Cartagena, and had urged his acceptance of it as the only course likely to restore him both to health and position, and to meet the deferred hopes of his sorrowing mother.

"Accept it, *sobrino mío,"* the uncle had said. "Else, pass your remaining days in confinement. There can be no refutation of the charges against you. But, if these doors open again to you, think not ever to sever your connection with the Church of Rome. For, if the Rincón honor should prove inadequate to hold you to your oath, be assured that Rincón justice will follow you until the grave wipes out the stain upon our fair name."

"Then, *tío mío,* let the Church at once dismiss me, as unworthy to be her son!" pleaded José.

"What, excommunication?" cried the horrified uncle. "Never! Death first! Are you still mad?"

José looked into the cold, emotionless eyes of the man and shuddered. The ancient spirit of the Holy Inquisition lurked there, and he cowered before it. But at least the semblance of freedom had been offered him. His numbed heart already had taken hope. He were indeed mad not to acquiesce in his uncle's demands, and accept the proffered opportunity to leave forever the scenes of his suffering and disgrace. And so he bowed again before the inexorable.

Arriving in Cartagena some months before this narrative opens, he had gradually yielded himself to the restorative effects

of changed environment and the hope which his uncle's warm assurances aroused, that a career would open to him in the New World, unclouded by the climacteric episode of the publishing of his journal and his subsequent arrogant bearing before the Holy Father, which had provoked his fate. Under the beneficent influences of the soft climate and the new interests of this tropic land he began to feel a budding of something like confidence, and the suggestions of an unfamiliar ambition to retrieve past failure and yet gratify, even if in small measure, the parental hope which had first directed him as a child into the fold of the Church. The Bishop had assigned him at once to pedagogical work in the University; and in the teaching of history, the languages, and, especially, his beloved Greek, José had found an absorption that was slowly dimming the memory of the dark days which he had left behind in the Old World.

But the University had not afforded him the only interest in his new field. He had not been many weeks on Colombian soil when his awakening perceptions sensed the people's oppression under the tyranny of ecclesiastical politicians. Nor did he fail to scent the approach of a tremendous conflict, in which the country would pass through violent throes in the struggle to shake off the galling yoke of Rome. Maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality, he had striven quietly to gauge the anticlerical movement, and had been appalled to find it so widespread and menacing. Only a miracle could save unhappy Colombia from being rent by the fiercest of religious wars in the near future. Oh, if he but had the will, as he had the intellectual ability, to throw himself into the widening breach!

"There is but one remedy," he murmured aloud, as he sat one evening on a bench in the *plaza* of Simón Bolívar, watching the stream of gaily dressed promenaders parading slowly about on the tesselated walks, but hearing little of their animated conversation.

"And what is that, may I ask, friend?"

The priest roused up with a start. He had no idea that his audible meditations had been overheard. Besides, he had spoken in English. But this question had been framed in the same tongue. He looked around. A tall, slender man, with thin, bronzed face and well-trimmed Van Dyke beard, sat beside him. The man laughed pleasantly.

"Didn't know that I should find any one here to-night who could speak my lingo," he said cordially. "But, I repeat, what is the remedy?"

"Christianity," returned the amazed José, without knowing what he said.

"And the condition to be remedied?" continued the stranger.

"This country's diseased—but to whom have I the honor of speaking?" drawing himself up a little stiffly, and glancing about to see who might be observing them.

"Oh, my credentials?" laughed the man, as he caught José's wondering look. "I'm quite unknown in Cartagena, unfortunately. You must pardon my Yankee inquisitiveness, but I've watched you out here for several evenings, and have wondered what weighty problems you were wrestling with. A quite unpardonable offense, from the Spanish viewpoint, but wholly forgivable in an uncouth American, I'm sure. Besides, when I heard you speak my language it made me a bit homesick, and I wanted to hear more of the rugged tongue of the Gentiles."

Laughing again good-naturedly, he reached into an inner pocket and drew out a wallet. "My name's Hitt," he said, handing José his card. "But I didn't live up to it. That is, I failed to make a hit up north, and so I'm down here." He chuckled at his own facetiousness. "Amos A. Hitt," he went on affably. "There used to be a 'Reverend' before it. That was when I was exploring the Lord's throne. I've dropped it, now that I'm humbly exploring His footstool instead."

José yielded to the man's friendly advances. This was not the first American he had met; yet it seemed a new type, and one that drew him strongly.

"So you think this country diseased, eh?" the American continued.

José did not answer. While there was nothing in the stranger's appearance and frank, open countenance to arouse suspicion, yet he must be careful. He was living down one frightful mistake. He could not risk another. But the man did not wait for a reply.

"Well, I'm quite agreed with you. It has *priest-itis*." He stopped and looked curiously at José, as if awaiting the effect of his bold words. Then—"I take it you are not really one of 'em?"

José stared at the man in amazement. Hitt laughed again. Then he drew forth a cigar and held it out. "Smoke?" he said. The priest shook his head. Hitt lighted the cigar himself, then settled back on the bench, his hands jammed into his trousers pockets, and his long legs stuck straight out in front, to the unconcealed annoyance of the passers-by. But, despite his *brusquerie* and his thoughtlessness, there was something about the American that was wonderfully attractive to the lonely priest.

"Yes, sir," Hitt went on abstractedly in corroboration of his former statement, "Colombia is absolutely stagnant, due to Jesuitical politics, the bane of all good Catholic countries. If she could shake off priestcraft she'd have a chance—provided she didn't fall into orthodox Protestantism."

José gasped, though he strove to hide his wonder. "You—" he began hesitatingly, "you were in the ministry—?"

"Yes. Don't be afraid to come right out with it. I was a Presbyterian divine some six years ago, in Cincinnati. Ever been there?"

José assured him that he had never seen the States.

"H'm," mused the ex-preacher; "great country—wonderful—none like it in the world! I've been all over, Europe, Asia, Africa—seen 'em all. America's the original Eden, and our women are the only true descendants of mother Eve. No question about it, that apple incident took place up in the States somewhere—probably in Ohio."

José caught the man's infectious humor and laughed heartily. Surely, this American was a tonic, and of the sort that he most needed. "Then, you are—still touring—?"

"I'm exploring," Hitt replied. "I'm here to study what ancient records I may find in your library; then I shall go on to Medellín and Bogotá. I'm on the track of a prehistoric Inca city, located somewhere in the Andes—and no doubt in the most inaccessible spot imaginable. Tradition cites this lost city as the cradle of Inca civilization. Tampu Tocco, it is called in their legends, the place from which the Incas went out to found that marvelous empire which eventually included the greater part of South America. The difficulty is," he added, knotting his brows, "that the city was evidently unknown to the Spaniards. I can find no mention of it in Spanish literature, and I've searched all through the libraries of Spain. My only hope now is that I shall run across some document down here that will allude to it, or some one who has heard likely Indian rumors."

José rubbed his eyes and looked hard at the man. "Well!" he ejaculated, "you are—if I may be permitted to say it—an original type."

"I presume I am," admitted the American genially. "I've been all sorts of things in my day, preacher, teacher, editor. My father used to be a circuit rider in New England forty years ago or more. Pious—good Lord! Why, he was one of the kind who believe the good book 'from kiver to kiver,' you know. Used to preach interminable sermons about the mercy of the Lord in holding us all over the smoking pit and not dropping us in! Why, man! after listening to him expound the Scriptures at night I used to go to bed with my hair on end and my skin all goose-flesh. No wonder I urged him to send me to the Presbyterian Seminary!"

"And you were ordained?" queried José, dark memories rising in his own thought.

"Thoroughly so! And glad I was of it, too, for I had grown up as pious and orthodox as my good father. I considered the ordination a through ticket to paradise."

"But—now—"

"Oh, I found myself in time," continued the man, answering José's unspoken thought. "Then I stopped preaching beautiful legends, and tried to be genuinely helpful to my congregation. I had a fine church in Cincinnati at that time. But—well, I mixed a trifle too much heresy into my up-to-date sermons, I guess. Anyway, the Assembly didn't approve my orthodoxy, and I had as little respect for its heterodoxy, and the upshot of it was that I quit—cold." He laughed grimly as he finished the recital. "But," he went on gravely, "I now see that it was due simply to my desire to progress beyond the acceptance of tradition and allegory as truth, and to find some better foundation upon which to build than the undemonstrable articles of faith embraced in the Westminster Confession. To me, that confession of faith had become a confession of ignorance." He turned his shrewd eyes upon José. "I was in somewhat the same mental state that I think you are in now," he added.

"And why, if I may ask, are you now exploring?" asked José, disregarding the implication.

"Oh, as for that," replied the American easily, "I used to teach history and became especially interested in ancient civilizations, lost cities, and the like, in the Western Hemisphere. Long before I left the ministry oil was struck on our little Pennsylvania farm, and—well, I didn't have to work after that. So for some years I've devoted myself strictly to my particular hobby of travel. And in my work I find it necessary to discard ceremony, and scrape acquaintance with all sorts and conditions. I especially cultivate clergymen. I've wanted to know you ever since I first saw you out here. But I couldn't wait for a formal introduction. And so I broke in unceremoniously upon your meditations a few moments ago."

"I am grateful to you for doing so," said José frankly, holding out a hand. "There is much that you can tell me—much that I want to know. But—" He again looked cautiously around.

"Ah, I understand," said Hitt, quickly sensing the priest's uneasiness. "What say you, shall we meet somewhere down by the city wall? Say, at the old Inquisition cells?"

José nodded his acquiescence, and they separated. A few minutes later the two were seated in one of the cavernous archways of the long, echoing corridor which leads to the deserted barracks and the gloomy, bat-infested cells beneath. A vagrant breeze drifted now and then across the grim wall above them,

and the deserted road in front lay drenched in the yellow light of the tropic moon. There was little likelihood of detection here, where the dreamy plash of the sea drowned the low sound of their voices; and José breathed more freely than in the populous *plaza* which they had just left.

"Good Lord!" muttered the explorer, returning from a peep into the foul blackness of a subterranean tunnel, "imagine what took place here some three centuries ago!"

"Yes," returned José sadly; "and in the reeking dungeons of San Fernando, out there at the harbor entrance. And, what is worse, my own ancestors were among the perpetrators of those black deeds committed in the name of Christ."

"Whew! You don't say! Tell me about it." The explorer drew closer. José knew somehow that he could trust this stranger, and so he briefly sketched his ancestral story to his sympathetic listener. "And no one knows," he concluded in a depressed tone, "how many of the thousands of victims of the Inquisition in Cartagena were sent to their doom by the house of Rincón. It may be," he sighed, "that the sins of my fathers have been visited upon me—that I am now paying in part the penalty for their criminal zeal."

The explorer sat for some time in silent meditation. "Perhaps," he said, "your family fell under the spell of old Saint Dominic. You know the legend? How God deliberated long whether to punish the wickedness of mankind by sending down war, plague, or famine, and was finally prevailed upon by Saint Dominic to send, instead, the Holy Inquisition. Another choice example of the convenient way the world has always had of attributing the foulest deeds of men to the Almighty. No wonder religion has so woefully declined!"

"But is it so up in the great North?" asked José. "Tell me, what is the religious status there? My limitations have been such that I have—I have not kept abreast of current theological thought."

"In the United States the conventional, passive submission to orthodox dogma is rapidly becoming a thing of the past," the explorer replied. "The people are beginning to think on these topics. All human opinion, philosophical, religious, or scientific, is in a state of liquefaction—not yet solidified. Just what will crystallize out of the magma is uncertain. The country is experiencing a religious crisis, and an irresistible determination to *know* is abroad in the land. Everything is being turned upside-down, and one hardly dares longer say what he believes, for the dogma of to-day is the fairy-tale of to-morrow. And, through it all, as some one has tersely said, 'orthodoxy is hanging onto the coat-tails of progress in a vain attempt to stop

her.' We are facing in the United States the momentous question, Is Christianity a failure? Although no one knows what Christianity really is. But one thing is certain, the brand of Christianity handed out by Protestant and Catholic alike is mighty close to the borderline of dismal failure."

"But is there in the North no distinct trend in religious belief?" queried José.

The explorer hestitated. "Yes," he said slowly, "there is. The man who holds and promulgates any belief, religious or scientific, is being more and more insistently forced to the point of demonstration. The citation of patristic authority is becoming daily more thoroughly obsolete."

"And there is no one who demonstrates practical Christianity?"

"No. Do you? Is there any one in your Church, or in the Protestant faith, who does the works which Christ is reported to have done? Is there any one who really tries to do them? Or thinks he could if he tried? The good church Fathers from the third century down could figure out that the world was created on the night before the twenty-third of October, four thousand and four B. C., and that Adam's fall occurred about noon of the day he was created. They could dilate *ad nauseam* on transubstantiation, the divine essence, and the mystery of the Trinity; they could astonishingly allegorize the Bible legends, and read into every word a deep, hidden, incomprehensible sense; they could prove to their own satisfaction that Adam composed certain of the Psalms; that Moses wrote every word of the Pentateuch, even the story of his own death and burial; and that the entire Bible was delivered by God to man, word for word, just as it stands, including the punctuation. And yet, not one of them followed the simple commands of Jesus closely enough to enable him to cure a toothache, to say nothing of generally healing the sick and raising the dead! Am I not right?"

"Yes—I am sorry to have to admit," murmured José.

"Well," went on the explorer, "that's what removed me from the Presbyterian ministry. It is not Christianity that is a dismal failure, but men's interpretation of it. Of true Christianity, I confess I know little. Oh, I'm a fine preacher! And yet I am representative of thousands of others, like myself, all at sea. Only, the others are either ashamed or afraid to make this confession. But, in my case, my daily bread did not depend upon my continuance in the pulpit."

"But supposing that it had—"

"The result doubtless would have been the same. The orthodox faith was utterly failing to supply me with a satisfying in-

terpretation of life, and it afforded me no means of escaping the discords of mundane existence. It could only hold out an undemonstrable promise of a life after death, provided I was elected, and provided I did not too greatly offend the Creator during the few short years that I might spend on earth. If I did that, then, according to the glorious Westminster Confession, I was doomed—for we are not so fortunate as you in having a purgatory from which we may escape through the suffrages of the faithful," he concluded with a chuckle.

José knew, as he listened, that his own Church would hold this man a blasphemer. The man by his own confession was branded a Protestant heretic. And he, José, was *anathema* for listening to these sincere, brutally frank confidences, and tendering them his warm sympathy. Yet he sat spellbound.

"And so I retired from the ministry," continued the explorer. "I had become ashamed of tearing down other men's religious beliefs. I was weary of having to apologize constantly for the organization to which I was attached. At home I had been taught a devout faith in revealed religion; in the world I was thrown upon its inquiring doubts; I yearned for faith, yet demanded scientific proof. Why, I would have been satisfied with even the slight degree of proof which we are able to advance for our various physical sciences. But, no, it was not forthcoming. I must believe because the Fathers had believed. I struggled between emotion and reason, until—well, until I had to throw it all over to keep from going mad."

José bowed in silence before this recital of a soul-experience so closely paralleling his own.

"But, come," said the explorer cheerily, "I'm doing all the talking. Now—"

"No! no!" interrupted the eager José. "I do not wish to talk. I want to hear you. Go on, I beg of you! Your words are like rain to a parched field. You will yet offer me something upon which I can build with new hope."

"Do not be so sanguine, my friend," returned the explorer in a kindly tone. "I fear I shall be only the reaper, who cuts the weeds and stubble, and prepares the field for the sower. I have said that I am an explorer. But my field is not limited to this material world. I am an explorer of men's thoughts as well. I am in search of a religion. I manifest this century's earnest quest for demonstrable truth. And so I stop and question every one I meet, if perchance he may point me in the right direction. My incessant wandering about the globe is, if I may put it that way, but the outward manifestation of my ceaseless search in the realm of the soul."

He paused. Then, reaching out and laying a hand upon the

priest's knee, he said in a low, earnest voice, "My friend, *something* happened in that first year of our so-called Christian era. What it was we do not know. But out of the smoke and dust, the haze and mist of that great cataclysm has proceeded the character Jesus—absolutely unique. It is a character which has had a terrific influence upon the world ever since. Because of it empires have crumbled; a hundred million human lives have been destroyed; and the thought-processes of a world have been overthrown or reversed. Just what he said, just what he did, just how he came, and how he went, we may not know with any high degree of accuracy. But, beneath all the myth and legend, the lore and childish human speculation of the intervening centuries, there *must* be a foundation of eternal truth. And it must be broad—very broad. I am digging for it—as I dug on the sites of ancient Troy and Babylon—as I have dug over the buried civilizations of Mexico and Yucatan—as I shall dig for the hidden Inca towns on the wooded heights of the Andes. And while I dig materially I am also digging spiritually."

"And what have you found?" asked José hoarsely.

"I am still in the overburden of *débris* which the sedulous, tireless Fathers heaped mountain high upon the few recorded teachings of Jesus. But already I see indications of things to come that would make the members of the Council of Trent and the cocksure framers of the Westminster Confession burst from their graves by sheer force of astonishment! There are even now foreshadowings of such revolutionary changes in our concept of God, of the universe, of matter, and the human mind, of evil, and all the controverted points of theological discussion of this day, as to make me tremble when I contemplate them. In my first hasty judgment, after dipping into the 'Higher Criticism,' I concluded that Jesus was but a charlatan, who had learned thaumaturgy in Egypt and practiced it in Judea. Thanks to a better appreciation of the same 'Higher Criticism' I am reconstructing my concept of him now, and on a better basis. I once denounced God as the creator of both good and evil, and of a man who He knew must inevitably fall, even before the clay of which he was made had become fairly dry. I changed that concept later to Matthew Arnold's 'that something not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' But mighty few to-day recognize such a God! Again, in Jesus' teaching that sin brought death into the world, I began to see what is so dimly foreshadowed to-day, the *mental* nature of all things. 'Sin' is the English translation of the original *'hamartio,'* which means, 'to miss the mark,' a term used in archery. Well, then, missing the mark is the mental result of nonconformity to law, is it

not? And, going further, if death is the result of missing the mark, and that is itself due to mental cause, and, since death results from sickness, old age, or catastrophe, then these things must likewise be mental. Sickness, therefore, becomes wholly mental, does it not? Death becomes mental. Sin is mental. Spirit, the Creator, is mental. Matter is mental. And we live and act in a mental realm, do we not? The sick man, then, becomes one who misses the mark, and therefore a sinner. I think you will agree with me that the sick man is not at peace with God, if God is 'that which makes for righteousness.' Surely the maker of that old Icelandic sixteenth-century Bible must have been inspired when, translating from Luther's Bible, he wrote in the first chapter of Genesis, 'And God created man after His own likeness, in the likeness of *Mind* shaped He him.' Cannot you see the foreshadowing to which I have referred?"

José kept silence. The current of his thought seemed about to swerve from its wonted course.

"What is coming is this," continued the explorer earnestly, "a tremendous broadening of our concept of God, a more exalted, a more worthy concept of Him as spirit—or, if you will, as mind. An abandonment of the puerile concept of Him as a sort of magnified man, susceptible to the influence of preachers, or of Virgin and Saints, and yielding to their petitions, to their higher sense of justice, and to money-bought earthly ceremonies to lift an imaginary curse from His own creatures. And with it will come that wonderful consciousness of Him which I now begin to realize that Jesus must have had, a consciousness of Him as omnipotent, omnipresent good. As I to-day read the teachings of Jesus I am constrained to believe that he was conscious *only* of God and God's spiritual manifestation. And in that remarkable consciousness the man Jesus realized his own life—indeed, that consciousness *was* his life—and it included no sense of evil. The great lesson which I draw from it is that evil must, therefore, be utterly unreal and non-existent. And heaven is but the acquisition of that mind or consciousness which was in Christ Jesus."

"But, Mr. Hitt, such ideas are revolutionary!"

"True, if immediately and generally adopted. And so you see why the Church strives to hold the people to its own archaic and innocuous religious tenets; why your Church strives so zealously to hold its adherents fast to the rules laid down by pagan emperors and ignorant, often illiterate churchmen, in their councils and synods; and why the Protestant church is so quick to denounce as unevangelical everything that does not measure to its devitalized concept of Christianity. They do not practice what they preach; yet they would not have you

practice anything else. The human mind that calls itself a Christian is a funny thing, isn't it?"

He laughed lightly; then lapsed into silence. The sea breeze rose and sighed among the great, incrusted arches. The restless waves moaned in their eternal assault upon the defiant walls. The moon clouded, and a warm rain began to fall. José rose. "I must return to the dormitory," he announced briefly. "When you pass me in the *plaza* to-morrow evening, come at once to this place. I will meet you here. You have—I must—"

But he did not finish. Pressing the explorer's hand, he turned abruptly and hurried up the dim, narrow street.

CHAPTER 14

ALL through the following day the priest mused over the conversation of the preceding night. The precipitation with which this new friendship had been formed, and the subsequent abrupt exchange of confidences, had scarcely impressed him as unusual. He was wholly absorbed by the radical thought which the man had voiced. He mulled over it in his wakeful hours that night. He could not prevent it from coloring the lecture which he delivered to his class in ancient history that day. And when the sun at length dropped behind La Popa, he hurried eagerly to the *plaza*. A few minutes later he and the ex-clergyman met in the appointed rendezvous.

"I dropped in to have a look at the remains of Pedro Claver to-day," his new friend remarked. "The old sexton scraped and bowed with huge joy as he led me behind the altar and lighted up the grewsome thing. I suppose he believed that Pedro's soul was up in the clouds making intercession with the Lord for him, while he, poor devil, was toting tourists around to gaze at the Saint's ghastly bones in their glass coffin. The thing would be funny were it not for its sad side, namely, the dense and superstitious ignorance in which such as this poor sexton are held all their lives by your Church. It's a shame to feed them with the bones of dead Saints, instead of with the bread of life! But," he reflected, "I was myself just as bigoted at one time. And my zeal to convert the world to Protestantism was just as hot as any that ever animated the missionaries of your faith."

He paused and looked quizzically at José. He seemed to be studying the length to which he could go in his criticism of the ancient faith of the house of Rincón. But José remained in expectant silence.

"Speaking of missionaries," the man resumed, "I shall never forget an experience I had in China. My wealthy and ultra-aristocratic congregation decided that I needed rest, and so sent me on a world tour. It was a member of that same congregation, by the way, a stuffy old dame whose wealth footed up to millions, who once remarked to me in all confidence that she had no doubt the aristocracy of heaven was composed of Presbyterians. (Poor, old, empty-headed prig!) What could I do but assure her that I held the same comforting conviction! Well, through influential friends in Pekin I was introduced to the eminent Chinese statesman, Wang Fo, of delightful memory. Our conversation turned on religion, and then I made the most inexcusable *faux pas* that a blithering Yankee could make, that of expressing regret that he was not of our faith. Good heavens! But he was the most gracious gentleman in the world, and his biting rebuke was couched in tones of silken softness.

"'What is it that you offer me?' he said mildly. 'Blind opinion? Undemonstrated and undemonstrable theory? Why, may I ask, do you come over here to convert us heathen, when your own Christian land is rife with evil, with sedition, with religious hatred of man for man, with bloodshed and greed? If your religious belief is true, then you can demonstrate it—prove it beyond doubt. Do you say that the wonderful material progress which your great country manifests is due to Christianity? I answer you, no. (It is due to the unfettering of the human mind, to the laying off of much of the mediaeval superstition which in the past ages has blighted mankind. It is due largely to the abandonment of much of what you are still pleased to call Christianity. The liberated human mind has expanded to a degree never before seen in the world. We Chinese are still mentally fettered by our stubborn resistance to change, to progression. Your great inventors and your great men of finance are but little hampered by religious superstition. Hence the mental flights which they so boldly undertake, and the stupendous achievements they attain. Is it not so?'

"What could I say? He had me. But he hadn't finished me quite.

"'I once devoted much time to the study of Chemistry,' he went on blandly, 'and when I tell you that there is a law to the effect that the volume of a gas is a function of its pressure I do so with the full knowledge that I can furnish you indisputable proof therefor. But when you come to me with your religious theories, and I mildly request your proofs, you wish to imprison or hang me for doubting the absurdities which you cannot establish!'

"He laughed genially, then took me kindly by the arm.

'Proof, my zealous friend, proof,' he said. 'Give me proof this side of the grave for what you believe, and then you will have converted the heathen. And can your Catholic friend—or, shall I say enemy?—prove his laughable doctrine of purgatory? The dead in purgatory dependent upon the living! Why, I tell him, that smacks of Shintoism, wherein the living feed the dead! Then he points in holy indignation to the Bible. Bah! Cannot I prove anything I may wish from your Bible? What will you have? Polygamy? Incest? Murder? Graft? Hand me your Bible, and I will establish its divinity. No, my good friend. When you come to me with proofs that you really do the works of him whom you profess to follow, then will I gladly listen, for I, too, seek truth. But in the present deplorable absence of proofs I take much more comfort in the adoration of my amiable ancestors than I could in your laughable and undemonstrable religious creeds.'

"I left his presence a saddened but chastened man, and went home to do a little independent thinking. When I approached my Bible without the bias of the Westminster Confession I discovered that it did serve admirably as a wardrobe in which to hang any sort of religious prejudice. Continued study made me see that religious faith is generally mere human credulity. I discovered that in my pitying contempt for those of differing belief I much resembled the Yankee who ridiculed a Chinaman for wearing a pig-tail. 'True,' the Celestial replied, 'we still wear the badge of our former slavery. But you emancipated Americans, do you not wear the badge of a present and much worse form of slavery in your domination by Tammany Hall, by your corrupt politicians, and your organizers and protectors of crime?'

"As time passed I gradually began to feel much more kindly toward Matthew Arnold, who said, 'Orthodox theology is an immense misunderstanding of the Bible.' And I began likewise to respect his statement that our Bible language is 'fluid and passing'—that much of it is the purest poetry, beautiful and inspiring, but symbolical."

"But," broke in José, "you must admit that there is something awfully wrong with the world, with—"

"Well," interrupted Hitt, "and what is it? As historical fact, that story about Adam and Eve eating an apple and thereby bringing down God's curse upon the whole innocent human race is but a figment of little minds, and an insult to divine intelligence. But, as symbolizing the dire penalty we pay for a belief in the reality of both good and evil—ah, that is a note just beginning to be sounded in the world at large. And it may account for the presence of the world's evil."

"Yet, our experience certainly shows that evil is just as real and just as immanent as good! And, indeed, more powerful in this life."

"If so," replied the explorer gravely, "then God created or instituted it. And in that case I must break with God."

"Then you think it is all a question of our own individual idea of God?"

"Entirely. And human concepts of Him have been many and varied. But that worst of Old Testament interpreters of the first century, Philo, came terribly close to the truth, I think, when, in a burst of inspiration, he one day wrote: 'Heaven is mind, and earth is sensation.' Matthew Arnold, I think, likewise came very close to the truth when he said that the only God we can recognize is 'that something not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' And, as for evil, up in the United States there are some who are now lumping it all under the head of 'mortal mind,' considering it all but the 'one lie' which Jesus so often referred to, and regarding it as the 'suppositional opposite' of the mind that is God, and so, powerless. Not a bad idea, I think. But whether the money-loving Yankee will ever leave his mad chase for gold long enough to live this premise and so demonstrate it, is a question. I'm watching its development with intense interest. We in the States have wonderful, exceptional opportunities for study and research. We ought to uncover the truth, if any people should."

He fell into thoughtfulness again. José drew a long sigh. "I wish—I wish," he murmured, "that I might go there—that I might live and work and search up there."

The explorer roused up. "And why not?" he asked abruptly. "Look here, come with me and spend a year or so digging around for buried Inca towns. Then we will go back to the States. Why, man! it would make you over. I'll take you as interpreter. And in the States I'll find a place for you. Come. Will you?"

For a moment the doors of imagination swung wide, and in the burst of light from within José saw the dreams of a lifetime fulfilled. Emancipation lay that way. Freedom, soul-expansion, truth. It was his God-given privilege. Who had the right to lay a detaining hand upon him? Was not his soul his own, and his God's?

Then a dark hand stole out from the surrounding shadows and closed the doors. From the blackness there seemed to rise a hollow voice, uttering the single word, *Honor*. He thrust out an arm, as if to ward off the assaults of temptation. "No, no," he said aloud, "I am bound to the Church!"

"But why remain longer in an institution with which you are quite out of sympathy?" the explorer urged.

"First, to help the Church. Who will uplift her if we desert her? And, second, to help this, my ancestral country," replied José in deep earnestness.

"Worthy aims, both," assented Hitt. "But, my friend, what will you accomplish here, unless you can educate these people to think? I have learned much about conditions in this country. I find that the priest in Colombia is even more intolerant than in Ireland, for here he has a monopoly, no competition. He is absolute. The Colombian is the logical product of the doctrines of Holy Church. It is so in Mexico. It is so wherever the curse of a fixed mentality is imposed upon a people. For that engenders determined opposition to mobility. It quenches responsiveness to new concepts and new ideas. It throttles a nation. The bane of mental progress is the *Semper Idem* of your Church."

"Christianity will remove the curse."

"I have no doubt whatever of that. It probably is the future cure for all social ills and evils of every sort. But if so, it must be the Christianity which Jesus taught and demonstrated —not the theological chaff now disseminated in his name. Do not forget that we no longer know what Christianity is. It is a lost science."

"It can and will be recovered!" cried José warmly.

"I have said that is foreshadowed. But we must have the whole garment of the Christ, without human *addenda*. He is reported as having said, 'The works that I do bear witness of me.' Now the works of the Christian Church bear ample witness that she has not the true understanding of the Christ. Nor has that eminent Protestant divine, now teaching in a theological seminary in the States, who recently said that, although Jesus ministered miraculously to the physical man, yet it was not his intention that his disciples should continue that sort of ministry; that the healing which Jesus did was wholly incidental, and was not an example to be permanently imitated. Good heavens! how these poor theologians hide their inability to do the works of the Master by taking refuge in such ridiculously unwarranted assertions. To them the rule seems to be that, if you can't do a thing you must deny the possibility of its being done. Great logic, isn't it?

"And yet," he went on, "the Church has had nearly two thousand years in which to learn to do the works of the Master. Pretty dull pupil, I think. And we've had nearly two thousand years of theology from this slow pupil. Would that she would from now on give us a little real Christianity! Heavens! the world needs it. And yet, do you know, sectarian feeling is still so bitter in the so-called Church of God that if a Bishop of

the Anglican Church should admit Presbyterians, Methodists, or members of other denominations to his communion table a scream of rage would go up all over England, and a mighty demand would be raised to impeach the Bishop for heresy! Think of it! God above! the puny human mind. Do you wonder that the dogma of the Church has lost force? That, despite its thunders, thinking men laugh? I freely admit that our great need is to find an adequate substitute for the authority which others would like to impose upon us. But where shall we find such authority, if not in those who demonstrate their ability to do the works of the Master? Show me your works, and I'll show you my faith. This is my perpetual challenge.

"But, now," he said, "returning to the subject so near your heart: the condition of this country is that of a large part of South America, where the population is unsettled, even turbulent, and where a priesthood, fanatical, intolerant, often unscrupulous, pursue their devious means to extend and perpetuate unhindered the sway of your Church. Colombia is struggling to remove the blight which Spain laid upon her, namely, mediaeval religion. It is this same blighting religion, coupled with her remorseless greed, which has brought Spain to her present decrepit, empty state. And how she did strive to force that religion upon the world! Whole nations, like the Incas, for example, ruthlessly slaughtered by the papal-benisoned riffraff of Spain in her attempts to foist herself into world prestige and to bolster up the monstrous assumptions of Holy Church! The Incas were a grand nation, with a splendid mental viewpoint. But it withered under the touch of the mediaeval narrowness fastened upon it. Whole nations wasted in support of papal assumptions—and do you think that the end is yet? Far from it! War is coming here in Colombia. It may come in other parts of this Western Hemisphere, certainly in Mexico, certainly in Peru and Bolivia and Chili, rocked in the cradle of Holy Church for ages, but now at last awaking to a sense of their backward condition and its cause. If ever the Church had a chance to show what she could do when given a free hand, she has had it in these countries, particularly in Mexico. In all the nearly four centuries of her unmolested control in that fair land, oppressed by sword and crucifix, did she ever make an attempt worth the name to uplift and emancipate the common man? Not one. She took his few, hard-earned *pesos* to get his weary soul out of an imagined purgatory—but she left him to rot in peonage while on earth! But, friend, I repeat, the struggle is coming here in Colombia. And look you well to your own escape when it arrives!"

"And can I do nothing to help avert it?" cried the distressed José.

"Well," returned the explorer meditatively, "such bondage is removable either through education or war. But in Colombia I fear the latter will overtake the former by many decades."

"Then rest assured that I shall in the meantime do what in me lies to instruct my fellow-countrymen, and to avoid such a catastrophe!"

"Good luck to you, friend. And—by the way, here is a little book that may help you in your work. I'm quite sure you've never read it. Under the ban, you know. Renan's *Vie de Jésus*. It can do you no harm, and may be useful."

José reached out and took the little volume. It was *anathema*, he knew, but he could not refuse to accept it.

"And there is another book that I strongly recommend to you. I'm sorry I haven't a copy here. It once created quite a sensation. It is called, 'Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest.' Published anonymously, in Vienna, but unquestionably bearing the earmarks of authenticity. It mentions this country—"

Without speaking, José had slowly risen and started down the musty corridor, his thought aflame with the single desire to get away. Down past the empty barracks and gaping cells he went, without stopping to peer into their tenebrous depths—on and on, skirting the grim walls that typified the mediaevalism surrounding and fettering his restless thought—on to the long incline which led up to the broad esplanade on the summit. Must he forever flee this pursuing Nemesis? Or should he hurl himself from the wall, once he gained the top? At the upper end of the incline he heard the low sound of voices. A priest and a young girl who sat there on the parapet rose as he approached. He stopped abruptly in front of them. "Wenceslas!" he exclaimed. "And Maria!"

"Ah, *amigo*, a quiet stroll before retiring? It is a sultry night."

"Yes," slowly replied José, looking at the girl, who drew back into the shadow cast by the body of her companion. Then, bowing, he passed on down the wall and disappeared in the darkness that shrouded the distance.

A few minutes later the long form of the explorer appeared above the incline. Wenceslas and the girl had departed. Seeing no one, the American turned and descended to the ground, shaking his head in deep perplexity.

CHAPTER 15

THE next day was one of the Church's innumerable feast-days, and José was free to utilize it as he might. He determined on a visit to the suburb of Turbaco, some eight miles from Cartagena, and once the site of Don Ignacio's magnificent country home. Although he had been some months in Cartagena, he had never before felt any desire to pass beyond its walls. Now it seemed to him that he must break the limitation which those encircling walls typified, that his restless thought might expand ere it formulated into definite concepts and plans for future work. This morning he wanted to be alone. The old injury done to his sensitive spirit by the publication of his journal had been unwittingly opened anew. The old slowness had crept again into his gait since the evening before. Over night his countenance had resumed its wonted heaviness; and his slender shoulders bent again beneath their former burden.

When José arrived in Cartagena he had found it a city of vivid contrasts. There mediaevalism still strove with the spirit of modern progress; and so it suited well as an environment for the dilation of his shrunken soul-arteries. The lethal influence of the monastery long lay over him, beneath which he continued to manifest those eccentric habits which his prolonged state of loneliness had engendered. He looked askance at the amenities which his associates tentatively held out to him. He sank himself deep in study, and for weeks, even months, he shunned the world of people and things. He found no stimulus to a search for his ancestral palace within the city, nor for a study of the Rincón records which lay moldering in the ancient city's archives.

But, as the sunlit days drifted dreamily past with peaceful, unvarying monotony, José's faculties, which had always been alert until he had been declared insane, gradually awakened. His violently disturbed balance began to right itself; his equilibrium became in a measure restored. The deadening thought that he had accomplished nothing in his vitiated life yielded to a hopeful determination to yet retrieve past failure. The pride and fear which had balked the thought of self-destruction now served to fan the flame of fresh resolve. He dared not do any writing, it was true. But he could delve and study. And a thousand avenues opened to him through which he could serve his fellow-men. The papal instructions which his traveling companion, the Apostolic Delegate, had brought to the Bishop

of Cartagena, evidently had sufficed for his credentials; and the latter had made no occasion to refer to the priest's past. An order from the Vatican was law; and the Bishop obeyed it with no other thought than its inerrancy and inexorability. And with the lapse of the several months which had slipped rapidly away while he sought to forget and to clear from his mind the dark clouds of melancholia which had settled over it, José became convinced that the Bishop knew nothing of his career prior to his arrival in Colombia.

And it is possible that the young priest's secret would have died with him—that he would have lived out his life amid the peaceful scenes of this old, romantic town, and gone to his long rest at last with the consciousness of having accomplished his mite in the service of his fellow-beings; it is possible that Rome would have forgotten him; and that his uncle's ambitions, to which he knew that he had been regarded as in some way useful, would have flagged and perished over the watery waste which separated the New World from the Old, but for the intervention of one man, who crossed José's path early in his new life, found him inimical to his own worldly projects, and removed him, therefore, as sincerely in the name of Christ as the ancient *Conquistadores*, with priestly blessing, hewed from their paths of conquest the simple and harmless aborigines.

That man was Wenceslas Ortiz, trusted servant of Holy Church, who had established himself in Cartagena to keep a watchful eye on anticlerical proceedings. That he was able to do this, and at the same time turn them greatly to his own advantage, marks him as a man of more than usually keen and resourceful mentality. He was a native son, born of prosperous parents in the riverine town of Mompox, which, until the erratic Magdalena sought for itself a new channel, was the chief port between Barranquilla and the distant Honda. There had been neither family custom nor parental hopes to consider among the motives which had directed him into the Church. He was a born worldling, but with unmistakable talents for and keen appreciation of the art of politics. His love of money was subordinate only to his love of power. To both, his talents made access easy. In the contemplation of a career in his early years he had hesitated long between the Church and the Army; but had finally thrown his lot with the former, as offering not only equal possibilities of worldly preferment and riches, but far greater stability in those periodic revolutions to which his country was so addicted. The Army was frequently overthrown; the Church, never. The Government changed with every successful political revolution; the Church remained immovable. And so with the art of a trained politician he culti-

vated his chosen field with such intensity that even the Holy See felt the glow of his ardor, and in recognition of his marked abilities, his pious fervor and great influence, was constrained to place him just where he wished to be, at the right hand of the Bishop of Cartagena, and probable successor to that aged incumbent, who had grown to lean heavily and confidingly upon him.

As coadjutor, or suffragan to the Bishop of Cartagena, Wenceslas Ortiz had at length gathered unto himself sufficient influence of divers nature as, in his opinion, to ensure him the See in case the bishopric should, as was contemplated, be raised eventually to the status of a Metropolitan. It was he, rather than the Bishop, who distributed parishes to ambitious pastors and emoluments to greedy politicians. His irons in ecclesiastical, political, social and commercial fires were innumerable. The doctrine of the indivisibility of Church and State had in him an able champion—but only because he thereby found a sure means of increasing his prestige and augmenting his power and wealth. His methods of work manifested keenness, subtlety, shrewdness and skill. His rewards were lavish. His punishments, terrible. The latter smacked of the Inquisition: he preferred torture to quick despatch.

It had not taken Wenceslas long to estimate the character of the newcomer, José. Nor was he slow to perceive that this liberal pietist was cast in an unusual mold. Polity necessitated the cultivation of José, as it required the friendship—or, in any event, the thorough appraisement—of every one with whom Wenceslas might be associated. But the blandishments, artifice, diplomacy and hints of advancements which he poured out in profusion upon José he early saw would fail utterly to penetrate the armor of moral reserve with which the priest was clad, or effect in the slightest degree the impression which they were calculated to make.

In the course of time the priest became irritating; later, annoying; and finally, positively dangerous to the ambitions of Wenceslas. For, to illustrate, José had once discovered him, in the absence of the Bishop, celebrating Mass in a state of inebriation. This irritated. Wenceslas had only been careless. Again, José had several times shown himself suspicious of his fast-and-loose methods with the rival political factions of Cartagena. This was annoying. Finally, he had come upon José in the market place a few weeks prior, in earnest conference with Marcelena and the girl, Maria; and subsequent conversation with him developed the fact that the priest had other dark suspicions which were but too well founded. This was dangerous. It was high time to prepare for possible contingencies.

And so, in due time, carefully wording his hint that Padre José de Rincón might be a Radical spy in the ecclesiastical camp, Wenceslas found means to obtain from Rome a fairly comprehensive account of the priest's past history. He mused over this until an idea suddenly occurred to him, namely, the similarity of this account with many of the passages which he had found in a certain book, "The Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest"—a book which had cast the shadow of distrust upon Wenceslas himself in relation to certain matters of ecclesiastical politics in Colombia nearly three years before, and at a most unfortunate time. Indeed, this sudden, unheralded exposure had forced him to a hurried recasting of certain cherished plans, and drawn from him a burning, unquenchable desire to lay his pious hands upon the writer.

His influence with Rome at length revealed the secret of the wretched book's authorship. And from the moment that he learned it, José's fate was sealed. The crafty politician laughed aloud as he read the priest's history. Then he drew his plans and waited. But in the interim he made further investigations; and these he extended far back into the ancestral history of this unfortunate scion of the once powerful house of Rincón.

Meantime, a few carefully chosen words to the Bishop aroused a dull interest in that quarter. José had been seen mingling freely with men of very liberal political views. It would be well to warn him. Again, weeks later, Wenceslas was certain, from inquiries made among the students, that José's work in the classroom bordered a trifle too closely on radicalism. It were well to admonish him. And, still later, happening to call at José's quarters just above his own in the ecclesiastical dormitory, and not finding him in, he had been struck by the absence of crucifix or other religious symbol in the room. Was the young priest becoming careless of his example?

And now, on this important feast-day, where was Padre José? On the preceding evening, as Wenceslas leaned over the parapet of the wall after his surprise by José, he had noted in the dim light the salient features of a foreigner who, he had just learned, was registered at the Hotel Mariano from the United States. Moreover, Wenceslas had just come from José's room, whither he had gone in search of him, and—may the Saints pardon his excess of holy zeal which impelled him to examine the absent priest's effects!—he had returned now to the Bishop bearing a copy of Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, with the American's name on the flyleaf. It certainly were well to admonish Padre José again, and severely!

The Bishop, hardly to the surprise of his crafty coadjutor,

flew into a towering rage. He was a man of irascible temper, bitterly intolerant, and unreasoningly violent against all unbelievers, especially Americans whose affairs brought them to Colombia. In this respect he was the epitome of the ecclesiastical anti-foreign sentiment which obtained in that country. His intolerance of heretics was such that he would gladly have bound his own kin to the stake had he believed their opinions unorthodox. Yet he was thoroughly conscientious, a devout churchman, and saturated with the beliefs of papal infallibility and the divine origin of the Church. In the observance of church rites and ceremonies he was unremitting. In the soul-burning desire to witness the conversion of the world, and especially to see the lost children of Europe either coaxed or beaten back into the embrace of Holy Church, his zeal amounted to fanaticism. In the present case—

"Your Eminence," suggested the suave Wenceslas to his exasperated superior, "may I propose that you defer action until I can discover the exact status of this American?"

And the Bishop forthwith placed the whole matter in his trusted assistant's helpful hands.

Meantime, José and the American explorer sat in the shade of a magnificent palm on a high hill in beautiful Turbaco, looking out over the shimmering sea beyond. For Hitt had wandered into the *Plaza de Coches* just as José was taking a carriage, and the latter could not well refuse his proffered companionship for the day. Yet José feared to be seen in broad daylight with this stranger, and he involuntarily murmured a *Loado sea Dios!* when they reached Turbaco, as he believed, unobserved. He did not know that a sharp-eyed young novitiate, whom Wenceslas had detailed to keep the priest under surveillance, had hurried back to his superior with the report of José's departure with the *Americano* on this innocent pleasure jaunt.

"Say no more, my friend, in apology for your abrupt departure last evening," the explorer urged. "But tell me, rather, about your illustrious grandfather who had his country seat in this delightful spot. Why, man! this is paradise. I've a notion to come here to live some day."

José cast his apprehensions upon the soft ocean breeze, and gave himself up to the inspiriting influence of his charming environment. He dwelt at length upon the Rincón greatness of mediaeval days, and expressed the resolve sometime to delve into the family records which he knew must be hidden away in the moldering old city of Cartagena. "But now," he concluded, after another reference to the Church, "is Colombia to witness again the horror of those days of carnage? And over the human mind's interpretation of the Christ? God forbid!"

The American shook his head dubiously. "There is but one remedy—education. Not sectarian, partisan, worldly education —not instruction in relative truths and the chaff of materialistic speculation—but that sort of education whereby the selfish human mind is lifted in a measure out of itself, out of its petty jealousies and envyings, out of sneaking graft and touting for worldly emolument, and into a sense of the eternal truth that real prosperity and soundness of states and institutions are to be realized only when the Christ-principle, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' is made the measure of conduct. There is a tremendous truth which has long since been demonstrated, and yet which the world is most woefully slow to grasp, namely, that the surest, quickest means of realizing one's own prosperity and happiness is in that of others—not in a world to come, but right here and now."

"But that means the inauguration of the millennium," protested José.

"Well, and why not so?" returned the explorer calmly. "Has not that been the ultimate aim of Christianity, and of all serious effort for reform for the past two thousand years? And, do you know, the millennium could be ushered in tomorrow, if men only thought so? Within an incredibly short time evil, even to death itself, could be completely wiped off the earth. But this wiping-off process must take place in the minds and thoughts of men. Of that I am thoroughly convinced. But, tell me, have you ever expressed to the Bishop your views regarding the condition of this country?"

José flushed. "Yes," he replied in embarrassment. "Only a week ago I tried again to convince him of the inevitable trend of events here unless drastic measures were interposed by the Church. I had even lectured on it in my classes."

"Well, what did he say?"

"The Bishop is a man of very narrow vision," replied José. "He rebuked me severely and truculantly bade me confine my attention to the particular work assigned me and let affairs of politics alone. Of course, that meant leaving them to his assistant, Wenceslas. Mr. Hitt, Colombia needs a Luther!"

"Just so," returned the explorer gravely. "Priestcraft from the very earliest times has been one of the greatest curses of mankind. Its abuses date far back to Egyptian times, when even prostitution was countenanced by the priests, and when they practiced all sorts of impostures upon the ignorant masses. In the Middle Ages they turned Christianity, the richest of blessings, into a snare, a delusion, a rank farce. They arrogated to themselves all learning, all science. In Peru it was even illicit for any one not belonging to the nobility to attempt

to acquire learning. That was the sole privilege of priests and kings. In all nations, from the remotest antiquity, and whether civilized or not, learning has been claimed by the priests as the unique privilege of their caste—a privilege bestowed upon them by the special favor of the ruling deity. That's why they always sought to surround their intellectual treasures with a veil of mystery. Roger Bacon, the English monk, once said that it was necessary to keep the discoveries of the philosophers from those unworthy of knowing them. How did he expect a realization of 'Thy kingdom come,' I wonder?"

"They didn't expect it to come—on earth," said José.

"No. They relegated that to the imagined realm which was to be entered through the gateway of death. It's mighty convenient to be able to relegate your proofs to that mysterious realm beyond the grave. That has always been a tremendous power in the hands of priests of all times and lands. By the way, did you know that the story of Abel's assassination was one of many handed down, in one form or another, by the priests of India and Egypt?"

"Do you mean it?" inquired José eagerly.

"Certainly. The story doubtless comes from the ancient Egyptian tale which the priests of that time used to relate regarding the murder of Osiris by his brother, Set. It was a deed of jealousy. The story later became incorporated into the sacred books of India and Egypt, and was afterward taken over by the Hebrews, when they were captives in Egypt. The Hebrews learned much of Egyptian theology, and their own religion was greatly tinctured by it subsequently. The legend of the deluge, for example, is another tradition of those primitive days, and credited by the nations of antiquity. But here there is the likelihood of a connection with the great cataclysm of antiquity, the disappearance of the island of Atlantis in consequence of a violent earthquake and volcanic action. This alleged island, supposed to be a portion of the strip at one time connecting South America with Africa, is thought to have sunk beneath the waters of the present Atlantic ocean some nine thousand years before Solon visited Egypt, and hence, some eleven thousand years ago. Anyway, the story of this awful catastrophe got into the Egyptian records in the earliest times, and was handed down to the Hebrews, who probably based their story of the flood upon it. You see, there is a foundation of some sort for all those legends in the book of Genesis. The difficulty has been that humanity has for centuries childishly accepted them as historical fact. For example, the serpent story. Now in very primitive times the serpent was the special emblem of Kneph, the creator of the world, and

was regarded as a sort of good genius. It is still so regarded by the Chinese, who make of it one of their most beautiful symbols, the dragon. Later it became the emblem of Set, the slayer of Osiris; and after that it was looked upon with horror as the enemy of mankind, the destroyer, the evil principle. Hence, in Egypt, the Hebrew captives adopted the serpent as emblematical of evil, and later used it in their scriptural records as the evil genius that tempted Eve and brought about the fall of man. And so all people whose religious beliefs are founded upon the Hebrew Bible now look upon the serpent as the symbol of evil. Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans thus regard it."

José gazed at the man with rapt interest. "Don't stop!" he urged. "Go on! go on!"

Hitt laughed. "Well," he resumed, "the tree and the serpent were worshiped all through eastern countries, from Scandinavia to the Asiatic peninsula and down into Egypt. And, do you know, we even find vestiges of such worship in America? Down in Adams county, Ohio, on the banks of Brush creek, there is a great mound, called the serpent mound. It is seven hundred feet long, and greatly resembles the one in Glen Feechan, Argyleshire, Scotland. It also resembles the one I found in the ancient city of Tiahuanuco, whose ruins lie at an elevation of some thirteen thousand feet above the Pacific ocean, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, near the Bolivian frontier. This ancient city ages ago sent out colonists all over North and South America. These primitive people believed that a serpent emitted an egg from its mouth, and that the earth was born of that egg. Now the serpent mound in Ohio has an egg in its mouth. What is the logical inference?"

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed José, his eyes wide with astonishment.

Hitt laughed again in evident enjoyment of the priest's wonder. Then he resumed: "It has been established to my entire satisfaction that the ancient Egyptians and the Mayas of Central and South America used almost identical symbols. And from all antiquity, and by all nations, the symbols of the tree and serpent and their worship have been so closely identified as to render it certain that their origin is the same. What, then, are the serpent and tree of knowledge in the Hebrew Bible but an outgrowth of this? The tree of life, of civilization, of knowledge, was placed in the middle of the land, of the 'garden,' of the primitive country of the race, Mayax. And the empire of the Mayas was situated between the two great continents of North and South America. These people spread out in all directions. They populated the then existing island of Atlantis. And when the terrible earthquake

occurred, whereby this island was sunk beneath the waves of the Atlantic ocean, why, to these people the world had been drowned! The story got to Egypt, to Chaldea, and to India. Hence the deluge record of Genesis."

"But, these primitive people, how ancient are they?" queried José.

"No one can form any adequate estimate," said Hitt in reply. "The wonderful city of Tiahuanuco was in ruins when Manco Capac laid the foundations of the Inca empire, which was later devastated by the Spaniards. And the Indians told the Spaniards that it had been constructed by giants before the sun shone in heaven."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed José. "Such facts as these—if facts they be—relegate much of the Scriptural authority to the realm of legend and myth!"

"Quite so," returned the explorer. "When the human mind of this century forces itself to approach a subject without prejudice or bias, and without the desire to erect or maintain a purely human institution at whatever cost to world-progress, then it finds that much of the hampering, fettering dogma of mediaevalism now laid upon it by the Church becomes pure fiction, without justifiable warrant or basis. Remember, the Hebrew people gave us the Old Testament, in which they had recorded for ages their tribal and national history, their poetry, their beliefs and hopes, as well as their legends, gathered from all sources. We have likewise the historical records of other nations. But the Hebrew possessed one characteristic which differentiated him from all other people. He was a monotheist, and he saw his God in every thing, every event, every place. His concept of God was his life-motif. This concept evolved slowly, painfully, throughout the centuries. The ancient Hebrew patriarchs saw it as a variable God, changeful, fickle, now violently angry, now humbly repentant, now making contracts with mankind, now petulantly destroying His own handiwork. He was a God who could order the slaughter of innocent babes, as in the book of Samuel; or He was a tender, merciful Father, as in the Psalms. He could harden hearts, wage bloody wars, walk with men 'in the cool of the day,' create a universe with His fiat, or spend long days designing and devising the material utensils and furniture of sacrifice to be used in His own worship. In short, men saw in Him just what they saw in themselves. They saw but their mental concept. The Bible records humanity's changing, evolving concept of God, of that 'something not ourselves which makes for righteousness.' And this concept gradually changed from the magnified God-man of the Old Testament, a creature of human

whims and passions, down to that held by the man of Nazareth, a new and beautiful concept of God as love. This new concept Jesus joyously gave to a sin-weary world that had utterly missed the mark. But it cost him his earthly life to do it. And the dark record of the so-called Christian Church, both Protestant and Catholic, contains the name of many a one who has paid the same penalty for a similar service of love.

"The Chaldeans and Egyptians," he went on, after a moment's reflective pause, "gave the Hebrews their account of the creation of the universe, the fall of man, the flood, and many other bits of mythical lore. And into these stories the Hebrews read the activity of their God, and drew from them deep moral lessons. Egypt gave the Hebrews at least a part of the story of Joseph, as embodied in the hieroglyphics which may be read on the banks of the Nile to-day. They probably also gave the Hebrews the account of the creation found in the second chapter of Genesis, for to this day you can see in some of the oldest Egyptian temples pictures of the gods making men out of lumps of clay. The discovery of the remains of the 'Neanderthal man' and the 'Ape-man of Java' now places the dawn of human reason at a period some three to five hundred thousand years prior to our present century, and, combined with the development of the science of geology, which shows that the total age of the earth's stratified rocks alone cannot be much less than fifty-five millions of years, serves to cast additional ridicule upon the Church's present attitude of stubborn adherence to these prehistoric scriptural legends as literal, God-given fact. But, to make the right use of these legends—well, that is another thing."

"And that?"

The explorer hesitated. "I find it difficult to explain," he said at length. "But, remember what I have already said, there is, there *must* be, a foundation beneath all these legends which admonish mankind to turn from evil to good. And, as I also said, that foundation must be very broad. I have said that I was in search of a religion. Why not, you may ask, accept the religious standard which Jesus set? That was the new concept of God as love. Very good. I am quite convinced that love is *the* religion, *the* tie which binds all things together and to a common source and cause. And I am equally convinced that Jesus is the only person recorded in history who ever lived a life of pure reflection of the love which he called God. And so you see why I am chipping and hewing away at the theological conception of the Christ, and trying to get at the reality buried deep beneath in the theological misconceptions of the centuries. I am quite convinced that if men loved one another,

as Jesus bade them do, all war, strife, disease, poverty, and discord of every sort would vanish from human experience. But—and here is a serious question—did Jesus ask the impossible? Did he command us to love the sinful, erring mortal whom we see in our daily walk—or did he—did he have a new thought, namely, that by loving the real man, for which, perhaps, this human concept stands in the human mind, *that this very act would change that distorted concept and cause it to yield its place to the real one?* I believe Jesus to have been the wisest man who ever trod this earth. But I likewise believe that no man has ever been more deplorably misunderstood, misquoted, and misinterpreted than he. And so I am delving down, down beneath the mass of human conjecture and ridiculous hypothesis which the Church Fathers and our own theologians have heaped up over this unique character, if perchance I may some day discover just what he was, just what he really said, and just what the message which he sought to convey to mankind."

He leaned over and laid a hand on José's arm. "My young friend," he said earnestly, "I believe there are meanings in the life and words of Jesus of which the Church in its astounding self-sufficiency has never even dreamed. Did he walk on the water? Did he feed the multitude with a few loaves? Did he raise Lazarus? Did he himself issue from the tomb? No more momentous questions were ever asked than these. For, if so, *then the message of Jesus has a bearing on the material universe, on the human mind, and the whole realm of thought that is utterly revolutionary!* What was that message? Did the man's own apostles and immediate followers understand it? Did Paul? Certain we are, however, that the theology which Rome gave to her barbarian conquerors was wholly different from that taught by Jesus and his disciples. And we know that the history of Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire down to the Franco-Prussian war is largely a recital of the development of the religious beliefs which Rome handed down to her conquerors, and their influence upon the human mind. These beliefs constitute the working hypothesis of that institution known to-day as the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and its separated offshoots, the Greek Catholic and the Protestant Churches, including the numberless ramifications and divisions of the latter. The question as to whether eternal salvation is a function of complete immersion of the human body, or only a gentle sprinkling, appears most lamentably puerile in the face of the tremendous revolutionary truths hinted by the deeds of Jesus, assuming that he has been correctly reported in the Gospels. No; Renan, in his *Vie de Jésus,* which I gave you last

night, missed it. Before him, Voltaire and countless other critics of man-made theology missed it. The writings of these men do serve, however, to mow down the theological stubble in the world's field of thought. What is it, this gigantic truth which Jesus brought? I do not know. But he himself is reported to have said, 'If ye keep my commands, ye shall know of the doctrine.' And his chief command was, *that we love God and our fellow-men.* I have no doubt whatever that, when we follow this command, we shall know of the doctrine which he came to establish in the hearts of men."

"But his message was the brotherhood of man," said José.

"Nay," replied the explorer, "it was the *fatherhood* of God, rather. For that includes the brotherhood of man. But, while we agree thus far, who can say what the fatherhood of God implies? Who, realizing that this was Jesus' message, knows how to make it practical, as he did? To him it meant—ah, what did it not mean! It meant a consciousness that held *not one trace of evil.* It meant a consciousness of God as omnipotent power, the irresistible power of good, which, in the form of spirit, or mind, as some will have it, is ever present. Is it not so? Well, then, who is there to-day, within the Church or without, who understands the divine message of the fatherhood of God sufficiently to acquire such a consciousness, and to make the intensely practical application of the message to every problem of mind, or body, or environment? Who to-day in your Church or mine, for example, realizes that Jesus must have seen something in matter far different from the solid, indestructible thing that we think we see, and that this was due to his understanding of the immanence of his Father as spirit—an understanding which enabled him to walk on the waves, and to treat material things as if they were not? No, my friend, the Christ-message of the fatherhood of God is hardly apprehended in the world to-day in the slightest degree by priest or prelate, church or sect. And yet, the influence of Jesus is tremendous!"

José's brow knit in perplexity. "I—I don't believe I follow you, quite," he said.

"I am not surprised," replied the explorer gently. "I sometimes wonder if I understand myself just what it is that I am trying to express. My belief is still in a state of transition. I am still searching. The field has been cleared. And now—now I am waiting for the new seed. I have abandoned forever the sterile, non-productive religious beliefs of current theology. I have abandoned such belittling views of God as the Presbyterian sublapsarian view of election. I have turned wearily from the puerile dogma of your Church as unworthy of the Father

of Jesus. From delving into the mysteries of the Brahminism of India, of ancestor-worship in Japan, of Confucianism in China, of Islamism in the far East, I have come back to the wonderful man of Nazareth. And now I am trying to see what Christianity would be if purged of its adulterations—purged of the Greek philosophy of the early Fathers; of the forgeries of the Middle Ages; of the pagan ceremonialism and priestly rites and assumptions of power to save or damn in this present century. And what do I find, after all this rubbish has been filtered out? Love, friend—love; the unfathomable love of the Father of Jesus, who knows no evil, no sin, no sickness, no death, no hell, no material heaven, but whose kingdom is the harmonious realm of spirit, or mind, wherein the individual consciousness knows no discord of any name or nature."

The afternoon haze had been long gathering when José roused the sleeping *cochero* and prepared to return to the stifling ecclesiastical atmosphere from which for a brief day he had been so happily free. A cold chill swept over him when he took his seat in the carriage, and he shuddered as if with an evil presentiment.

"And you still adhere to your determination to remain in the Church?" his friend asked, as they turned from the green hills and nodding palms of Turbaco, and set their course toward the distant mediaeval city.

"Yes," came the scarcely audible reply. But as José spoke, he knew that his mind had that day been stripped of its last remaining vestige of the old theology, leaving it bare, exposed —and receptive.

* * * * * *

A week passed. The explorer had gone, as silently and unannounced as he had come. The evening before his departure he and José had sat again in the thick shadows of the old wall. The next morning he was on the mighty river; and the priest was left with a great void in his heart.

One noon, as José was returning from his classes, he pondered deeply the last words of the explorer, "Remember, nothing that has been invented by mankind or evolved by the human mind can stand, or remain. We might just as well accept that great fact now as later, and adjust ourselves to it. But the things of the spirit remain. And Paul has told us what they are."

As he passed slowly along the winding little street toward the dormitory, a messenger approached him with a summons from the Bishop. He turned and started wonderingly toward the Cathedral. He had been reprimanded once, twice, for the liberal views which he had expressed to his classes. Was he

to receive another rebuke now? He had tried to be more careful of late. Had he been seen with the explorer?

An hour later, his eyes set and unseeing, and his thin lips trembling, José dragged himself up the stone steps to his little room and threw himself upon the bed. The bonds which had been slowly, imperceptibly tightening during these few months of precious liberty had been drawn suddenly taut. The Bishop, in the *rôle* of *Inquisitor Natus,* had just revealed a full knowledge of his dismal past, and had summarily dismissed him from the University faculty. José, bewildered and stunned, had tried vainly to defend himself. Then, realizing his impotence before the uncompromising bigotry of this choleric ecclesiastic, he had burst suddenly into a torrent of frenzied declarations of his undeserved wrongs, of his resolve now to renounce his oath, to leave the Church, to abandon honor, family, everything that held or claimed him, and to flee into unknown and unknowing parts, where his harassed soul might find a few years of rest before its final flight! The Bishop became bitterly and implacably infuriated, and remanded the excited priest to his room to reflect upon his wild words, and to await the final disposition of his case—unless he should have determined already to try the devious route of apostasy.

Rising the next morning at dawn from the chill floor where he had spent the torturing hours of an interminable night, and still clinging forlornly to his battered sense of honor and family pride, José again received the Bishop's summons; and, after the events of the morning already related, faced the angry churchman's furious tirade, and with it, what he could not have imagined before, a charge of hideous immorality. Then had been set before him a choice between apostasy and acceptance of the assignment to the parish of far-off Simití.

"And now, unpitying Fate," he murmured, as the door of the Bishop's *sanctum* closed behind him, and he wandered down through the gloom of the quiet Cathedral, "receive your victim. You have chosen well your carnal instruments—pride —ecclesiasticism—lust! My crimes? Aye, the very lowest; for I have loved liberty of thought and conscience; I have loved virtue and honor; the pursuits of intellect; the fair; the noble; yea, the better things of life. I have loved my fellowmen; and I have sought their emancipation from the thraldom of ignorance. I have loved truth, and the Christ who revealed it to the dull minds of mortals. Enough! I stand convicted! And—I accept the sentence—I have no desire to resist it. For the end is now not distant!"

CHAPTER 16

THE tropical moon shone in her fullness from an unclouded sky. Through the ethereal atmosphere which bathed the storied city her beams fell, plashing noiselessly upon the grim memorials of a stirring past. With a mantle of peace they gently covered the former scenes of violence and strife. With magic, intangible substance they filled out the rents in the grassy walls and smoothed away the scars of battle. The pale luster, streaming through narrow barbican and mildewed arch, touched the decaying ruin of San Felipe with the wand of enchantment, and restored it to pristine freshness and strength. Through the stillness of night the watery vapor streamed upward from garden and *patio,* and mingled with the scent of flushing roses and tropical buds in a fragrant mist suffused with the moon's yellow glow.

On the low parapet bordering the eastern esplanade of the city wall the solitary figure of the priest cast a narrow shadow in the pale moonlight. The sounds which eddied the enveloping silence seemed to echo in his ears the tread of mediaeval warriors. In the wraith-like shadows he saw the armored forms of *Conquistadores* in mortal strife with vulpine buccaneers. In the whirring of the bats which flouted his face he heard the singing of arrows and the hiss of hurled rocks. In the moan of the ocean as it broke on the coral reef below sounded the boom of cannon, the curses of combatants, and the groans of the dying. Here and there moved tonsured monks, now absolving in the name of the peaceful Christ the frenzied defenders of the Heroic City, now turning to hurl curses at the swarming enemy and consign their blackened souls to deepest hell, while holding images of the crucified Saviour to the quivering lips of stricken warriors.

In the fancied combat raging in the moonlight before him he saw the sons of the house of Rincón manifesting their devotion to Sovereign and Pope, their unshaken faith in Holy Church, their hot zeal which made them her valiant defenders, her support, her humble and devoted slaves for more than three centuries.

What was the charm by which she had held them? And why had its potency failed utterly when directed to him? But they were men of physical action, not thought—men of deeds which called only for brave hearts and stout bodies. It is true, there had been thinkers in those days, when the valiant sons of Rincón hurled the enemy from Cartagena's walls—

but they lay rotting in dungeons—they lay broken on the rack, or hung breathing out their souls to God amid the hot flames which His self-appointed vicars kindled about them. The Rincóns of that day had not been thinkers. But the centuries had finally evolved from their number a man of thought. Alas! the evolution had developed intellect, it is true—but the process had refined away the rugged qualities of animal strength which, without a deeper hold on Truth and the way to demonstrate it than José possessed, must leave him the plaything of Fate.

Young in years, but old in sorrow; held by oaths which his ever-accusing sense of honor would not let him break; trembling for his mother's sake, and for the sake of Rincón pride, lest the ban of excommunication fall upon him; yet little dreaming that Rome had no thought of this while his own peculiar elements of character bound him as they did to her; the man had at last yielded his life to the system which had wrecked it in the name of Christ, and was now awaiting the morrow, when the boat should bear him to far-off Simití. He went resignedly—even with a dull sense of gladness—for he went to die. Life had yielded him nothing—and constituted as he was, it could hold nothing for him in the future.

The glorious moon poured its full splendor upon the quiet city. Through the haze the convent on La Popa sparkled like an enchanted castle, with a pavement of soft moonbeams leading up to its doors. The trill of a distant nightingale rippled the scented air; and from the *llanos* were borne on the warm land breeze low feral sounds, broken now and then by the plaintive piping of a lonely toucan. The cocoa palms throughout the city stirred dreamily in the tempered moonlight; and the banana trees, bending with their luscious burden, cast great, mysterious shadows, wherein insect life rustled and scampered in nocturnal activity.

"Padre José!"

A woman's voice called from below. The priest leaned over the wall.

"It is Catalina. I have been hunting everywhere. Maria is calling for you. She cannot live long. You will come?"

Come? Yes—ah, why did he let his own misery blind him to the sorrow of others even more unfortunate! Why had he forgotten the little Maria! Descending the broad incline to the road below, José hurried with the woman to the bedside of the dying girl. On the way the warm-hearted, garrulous Catalina relieved her troubled and angered soul.

"Padre Lorenzo came this morning. He would not shrive her unless we would pay him first. He said he would do it for

ten *pesos*—then five—and then three. And when we kept telling him that we had no money he told us to go out and borrow it, or he would leave the little Maria to die as she was. He said she was a vile sinner anyway—that she had not made her Easter duty—that she could not have the Sacrament—and her soul would go straight to hell—and there was no redemption! Then he came again this afternoon and said she must die; but he would shrive her for two *pesos*. And when we told him we could not borrow the money he was terribly angry, and cursed—and Marcelena was frightened—and the little Maria almost died. But I told him to go—that her little soul was whiter than his—and if he went to heaven I didn't want Maria to go there too—and—!"

The woman's words burned through the priest's ears and into his sickened soul. Recovering her breath, Catalina went on:

"It is only a few days ago that the little Maria meets Sister Isabel in the *plaza*. 'Ah,' says Sister Isabel, 'you are going to be a mother.'

" 'Yes, Sister,' answers the little Maria, much confused; and she tries to hide behind Marcelena.

" 'It is very dangerous and you will suffer much unless you have a sacred cord of Saint Frances,' says the Sister. 'I will bring you one.'

"And then she asks where the little Maria lives; and that very day she brings a piece of rope, with knots in it, which she says the priest has blessed, and it is a sacred cord of Saint Frances, and if the little Maria will wear it around her waist she will not suffer at the parturition; and the little Maria must pay a *peso oro* for it—and the scared little lamb paid it, for she had saved a little money which Don Carlos Ojeda gave her for washing—and she wore it when the babe was born; but it didn't help her—"

"Dios!" ejaculated the priest.

"And Marcelena had paid a *peso y medio,"* continued the excited woman, "for a candle that Sister Natalia told her had come from the altar of the Virgin of Santander and was very holy and would help one through confinement. But the candle went out; and it was only a round stick of wood with a little piece of candle on the end. And I—Padre, I could not help it, I would do anything for the poor child—I paid two *pesos oro* for a new *escapulario* for her. Sister Natalia said it was very holy—it had been blessed by His Grace, the Bishop, just for women who were to be mothers, and it would carry them through—but if they died, it would take them right out of purgatory—and—!"

"Catalina!" interrupted the tortured priest. "Say no more!"

"But, Padre, the babe," the woman persisted. "What will become of it? And—do you know?—Padre Lorenzo says *it is yours!* He told Juanita so—she lives below us. But Maria says no. She has told only Marcelena—and Marcelena will never tell. Who is its father, Padre?"

The priest, recognizing the inevitable, patiently resigned himself to the woman's talk without further reply. Presently they turned into the Calle Lazano, and entering the house where Marcelena had greeted him that morning, mounted to the chamber above where lay the little Maria.

A single candle on a table near the head of the bed shed a flickering, uncertain light. But the window was open, and the moon's beams poured into the room in golden profusion. Aside from the girl, there were no other occupants than Marcelena and the new-born child.

"Padre," murmured the passing girl, "you will not let me die without the Sacrament?"

"No, child," replied the priest, bending over her, hot tears streaming down his cheeks as she kissed his hand.

The girl had been beautiful, a type of that soft, southern beauty, whose graces of form, full, regular features, and rich olive tint mark them as truly Spanish, with but little admixture of inferior blood. Her features were drawn and set now; but her great, brown eyes which she raised to the priest were luminous with a wistful eagerness that in this final hour became sacred.

"Marcelena," the priest hurriedly whispered to the woman. "I have no—but it matters not now; she need not know that I come unprepared. She must pass out of the world happy at last."

"There is a drop of wine that the doctor left; and I will fetch a bit of bread," replied the woman, catching the meaning of the priest's words.

"Bring it; and I will let her confess now."

Bending over the sinking girl, the priest bade her reveal the burden resting on her conscience.

"*Carita,*" he said tenderly, when the confession was ended, "fear not. The blessed Saviour died for you. He went to prepare a place for you and for us all. He forgave the sinful woman—*carita,* he forgives you—yes, freely, gladly. He loves you, little one. Fear not what Padre Lorenzo said. He is a sinful priest. Forget all now but the good Saviour, who stands with open arms—with a smile on his beautiful face—to welcome his dear child—his little girl—you, *carita,* you."

"Padre—my babe?"

"Yes, child, it shall be cared for."

"But not by the Sisters"—excitedly—"not in an asylum—Padre, promise me!"

"There, *carita*, it shall be as you wish."

"And you will care for it?"

"I, child?—ah, yes, I will care for it."

The girl sank back again with a smile of happiness. A deep silence fell upon the room. At the feet of the priest Catalina huddled and wept softly. Marcelena, in the shadow of the bed where she might not be seen, rocked silently back and forth with breaking heart.

"Padre—you will—say Masses for me?" The words were scarcely audible.

"Yes, *carita*."

"I—have no money—no money. He promised to give me—money—and clothes—"

"There, *carita*, I will say Masses for you without money—every day, for a year. And you shall have clothes—ah, *carita*, in heaven you shall have everything."

The candle sputtered, and went out. The moon flooded the room with ethereal radiance.

"Padre—lift me up—it grows dark—oh, Padre, you are so good to me—so good."

"No, child, it is not I who am good to you, but the blessed Christ. See him, *carita*—there—there in the moonlight he stands!"

The smoke from a neighboring chimney drifted slowly past the window and shone white in the silvery beams. The girl, supported by the arm of the priest, gazed at it through dimming eyes in reverent awe.

"Padre," she whispered, "it is the Saviour! Pray to him for me."

"Yes, child." And turning toward the window the priest extended his hand.

"Blessed Saviour," he prayed, "this is one of thy stricken lambs, lured by the wolf from the fold. And we have brought her back. Dost thou bid her come?"

The sobs of the weeping woman at his feet floated through the room.

"Ah, thou tender and pitying Master—best friend of the sinning, the sick, and the sorrowing—we offer to thee this bruised child. We find no sin, no guile, in her; for after the ignorant code of men she has paid the last farthing for satisfying the wolf's greed. Dost thou bid her come?"

In the presence of death he felt his own terrible impotence. Of what avail then was his Christianity? Or the Church's

traditional words of comfort? The priest's tears fell fast. But something within—perhaps that "something not ourselves"—the voice of Israel's almost forgotten God—whispered a hope that blossomed in this petition of tenderest love and pity. He had long since ceased to pray for himself; but in this, the only prayer that had welled from his chilled heart in months, his pitying desire to humor the wishes of a dying girl had unconsciously formulated his own soul's appeal.

"Blessed Saviour, take her to thine arms; shield her forever more from the carnal lust of the wolf; lift her above the deadening superstitions and hypocritical creeds of those who touch but to stain; take her, Saviour, for we find her pure, innocent, clean; suffering and sorrow have purged away the sin. Dost thou bid her come?"

The scent of roses and orange blossoms from the garden below drifted into the room on the warm breeze. A bird, awakened by the swaying of its nest, peeped a few sweet notes of contentment, and slept again.

"We would save her—we would cure her—but we, too, have strayed from thee and forgotten thy commands—and the precious gift of healing which thou didst leave with men has long been lost. But thou art here—thy compassionate touch still heals and saves. Jesus, unique son of God, behold thy child. Wilt thou bid her come?"

"What says he, Padre?" murmured the sinking girl.

The priest bent close to her.

"He says come, *carita*—come!"

With a fluttering sigh the tired child sank back into the priest's arms and dropped softly into her long sleep.

CHAPTER 17

THE twisted, turbid "Danube of New Granada," under the gentle guidance of its patron, Saint Mary Magdalene, threads the greater part of its sinuous way through the heart of Colombia like an immense, slow-moving morass. Born of the arduous tropic sun and chill snows, and imbued by the river god with the nomadic instinct, it leaps from its pinnacled cradle and rushes, sparkling with youthful vigor, down precipice and perpendicular cliff; down rocky steeps and jagged ridges; whirling in merry, momentary dance in shaded basins; singing in swirling eddies; roaring in boisterous cataracts, to its mad plunge over the lofty wall of Tequendama, whence it subsides into the dignity of broad maturity, and begins its

long, wandering, adult life, which slowly draws to a sluggish old age and final oblivion in the infinite sea. Toward the close of its meandering course, long after the follies and excesses of early life, it takes unto itself a consort, the beautiful Cauca; and together they flow, broadening and deepening as life nears its end; merging their destinies; sharing their burdens; until at last, with labors ended, they sink their identities in the sunlit Caribbean.

When the simple-minded *Conquistadores* first pushed their frail cockleshells out into the gigantic embouchure of this tawny stream and looked vainly for the opposite shore, veiled by the dewy mists of a glittering morn, they unconsciously crossed themselves and, forgetful for the moment of greed and rapine and the lust of gold, stood in reverent awe before the handiwork of their Creator. Ere the Spaniard had laid his fell curse upon this ancient kingdom of the Chibchas, the flowering banks of the Magdalena, to-day so mournfully characterized by their frightful solitudes, were an almost unbroken village from the present coast city of Barranquilla to Honda, the limit of navigation, some nine hundred miles to the south. The cupidity of the heartless, bigoted rabble from mediaeval slums which poured into this wonderland late in the sixteenth century laid waste this luxuriant vale and exterminated its trustful inhabitants. Now the warm airs that sigh at night along the great river's uncultivated borders seem still to echo the gentle laments of the once happy dwellers in this primitive paradise.

Sitting in the rounded bow of the wretched riverine steamer Honda, Padre José de Rincón gazed with vacant eyes upon the scenery on either hand. The boat had arrived from Barranquilla that morning, and was now experiencing the usual exasperating delay in embarking from Calamar. He had just returned to it, after wandering for hours through the forlorn little town, tormented physically by the myriad mosquitoes, and mentally by a surprising eagerness to reach his destination. He could account for the latter only on the ground of complete resignation—a feeling experienced by those unfortunate souls who have lost their way in life, and, after vain resistance to molding circumstances, after the thwarting of ambitions, the quenching of ideals, admit defeat, and await, with something of feverish anticipation, the end. He had left Cartagena early that morning on the ramshackle little train which, after hours of jolting over an undulating roadbed, set him down in Calamar, exhausted with the heat and dust-begrimed. He had not seen the Bishop nor Wenceslas since the interview of the preceding day. Before his departure, however, he had made provision for the burial of the girl, Maria, and the disposal of her child.

This he did at his own expense; and when the demands of doctor and sexton had been met, and he had provided Marcelena with funds for the care of herself and the child for at least a few weeks, his purse was pitiably light.

Late in the afternoon the straggling remnant of a sea breeze drifted up the river and tempered the scorching heat. Then the captain of the Honda drained his last glass of red rum in the *posada,* reiterated to his political affiliates with spiritous bombast his condensed opinion anent the Government, and dramatically signaled the pilot to get under way.

Beyond the fact that Simití lay somewhere behind the liana-veiled banks of the great river, perhaps three hundred miles from Cartagena, the priest knew nothing of his destination. There were no passengers bound for the place, the captain had told him; nor had the captain himself ever been there, although he knew that one must leave the boat at a point called Badillo, and thence go by canoe to the town in question.

But José's interest in Simití was only such as one might manifest in a prison to which he was being conveyed. And, as a prisoner of the Church, he inwardly prayed that his remaining days might be few. The blows which had fallen, one after another, upon his keen, raw nerves had left him benumbed. The cruel bruises which his faith in man had received in Rome and Cartagena had left him listless, and without pain. He was accepting the Bishop's final judgment mutely, for he had already borne all that human nature could endure. His severance from a life of faith and love was complete.

Nor could José learn when he might hope to reach Badillo, though he made listless inquiry.

"Na, Señor Padre," the captain had said, "we never know where to find the water. It is on the right to-day; on the left to-morrow. There is low tide to-night; the morning may see it ten feet higher. And Badillo—*quien sabe?* It might be washed away when we arrive." And he shrugged his shoulders in complete disclaimer of any responsibility therefor.

The captain's words were not idle, for the channel of the mighty river changes with the caprice of a maiden's heart. With irresistible momentum the tawny flood rolls over the continent, now impatiently ploughing its way across a great bend, destroying plantations and abruptly leaving towns and villages many miles inland; now savagely filching away the soft loam banks beneath little settlements and greedily adding broad acres to the burden of its surcharged waters. Mighty giants of the forest, wrested from their footholds of centuries, plunge with terrifying noise into the relentless stream; great masses of earth, still cohering, break from their moorings and

glide into the whirling waters, where, like immense islands, they journey bobbing and tumbling toward the distant sea.

Against the strong current, whose quartzose sediment tinkled metallically about her iron prow, the clumsy Honda made slow headway. She was a craft of some two hundred tons burden, with iron hull, stern paddle wheel, and corrugated metal passenger deck and roof. Below the passenger deck, and well forward on the hull, stood the huge, wood-burning boiler, whose incandescent stack pierced the open space where the gasping travelers were forced to congregate to get what air they might. Midway on this deck she carried a few cabins at either side. These, bare of furnishings, might accommodate a dozen passengers, if the insufferable heat would permit them to be occupied. Each traveler was obliged to supply his own bedding, and likewise hammock, unless not too discriminating to use the soiled cot provided. Many of those whose affairs necessitated river travel—and there was no other mode of reaching the interior—were content at night to wrap a light blanket about them and lie down under their mosquito nets on the straw mats—*petates*—with which every *peon* goes provided. Of service, there was none that might be so designated. A few dirty, half-dressed negro boys from the streets of Barranquilla performed the functions of steward, waiting on table with unwashed hands, helping to sling hammocks, or assisting with the carving of the freshly killed beef on the slippery deck below. Accustomed as he had been to the comforts of Rome, and to the less elaborate though still adequate accommodations which Cartagena afforded, José viewed his prison boat with sinking heart. Iron hull, and above it the glowing boiler; over this the metal passenger deck; and above that the iron roof, upon which the fierce tropical sun poured its flaming heat all day; clouds of steam and vapor from the hot river enveloping the boat—had the Holy Inquisition itself sought to devise the most refined torture for a man of delicate sensibilities like José de Rincón, it could not have done better than send him up the great river at this season and on that miserable craft, in company with his own morbid and soul-corroding thoughts.

The day wore on; and late in the evening the Honda docked at the pretentious town of Maganguey, the point of transfer for the river Cauca. Like the other passengers, from whom he had held himself reservedly aloof, José gladly seized the opportunity to divert his thoughts for a few moments by going ashore. But the moments stretched into hours; and when he finally learned that the boat would not leave until daybreak, he lapsed into a state of sullen desperation which, but for the Rincón stubbornness, would have precipitated him into the

dark stream. Aimlessly he wandered about the town, avoiding any possible *rencontre* with priests, or with his fellow-passengers, many of whom, together with the bacchanalian captain, he saw in the various *cantinas,* making merry over rum and the native *anisado.*

The moon rose late, bathing the whitewashed town in a soft sheen and covering with its yellow veil the filth and squalor which met the priest at every turn as he wandered through its ill-lighted streets. Maganguey in plan did not depart from the time-honored custom of the Spaniards, who erected their cities by first locating the church, and then building the town around it. So long as the church had a good location, the rest of the town might shift for itself. Some of the better buildings dated from the old colonial period, and had tile roofs and red brick floors. Many bore scars received in the interneçine warfare which has raged in the unhappy country with but brief intervals of peace since the days of Spanish occupation. But most of the houses were of the typical mud-plastered, palm-thatched variety, with dirt floors and scant furniture. Yet even in many of these José noted pianos and sewing machines, generally of German make, at which the housewife was occupied, while naked babes and squealing pigs—the latter of scarcely less value than the former—fought for places of preferment on the damp and grimy floors.

Wandering, blindly absorbed in thought, into a deserted road which branched off from one of the narrow streets on the outskirts of the town, José stumbled upon a figure crouching in the moonlight. Almost before he realized that it was a human being a hand had reached up and caught his.

"Buen Padre!" came a thick voice from the mass, "for the love of the good Virgin, a few *pesos!"*

A beggar—perhaps a bandit! Ah, well; José's purse was light—and his life of no value. So, recovering from his start, he sought in his pockets for some *billetes.* But—yes, he remembered that after purchasing his river transportation in Calamar he had carefully put his few remaining bills in his trunk.

"Amigo, I am sorry, but I have no money with me," he said regretfully. "But if you will come to the boat I will gladly give you something there."

At this the figure emitted a scream of rage, and broke into a torrent of sulphurous oaths. *"Na,* the Saints curse you beggarly priests! You have no money, but you rob us poor devils with your lies, and then leave us to rot to death!"

"But, *amigo,* did I not say—" began José soothingly.

"Maldito!" shrilled the figure; "may Joseph and Mary and Jesus curse you! A million curses on you, *maldito!"* Pulling itself upward, the shapeless thing sank its teeth deep into the priest's hand.

With a cry of pain the startled José tore himself loose, his hand dripping with blood. At the same time the figure fell over into the road and its enveloping rags slipped off, disclosing in the bright moonlight a loathsome, distorted face and elephantine limbs, covered with festering sores.

"Good God!" cried José, recoiling. "A leper!"

Turning swiftly from the hideous object, his brain awhirl with the horrible nightmare, the priest fled blindly from the scene. Nauseated, quivering with horror, with the obscene ravings of the leper still ringing in his ears, he stumbled about the town until daybreak, when the boat's shrieking whistle summoned him to embark.

The second day on the river seemed to José intolerable, as he shifted about the creaking, straining tub to avoid the sun's piercing rays and the heat which, drifting back from the hot stack forward, enveloped the entire craft. There were but few passengers, some half dozen men and two slatternly attired women. Whither they were bound, he knew not, nor cared; and, though they saluted him courteously, he studiously avoided being drawn into their conversations. The emotional appeal of the great river and its forest-lined banks did not at first affect him. Yet he sought forgetfulness of self by concentrating his thought upon them.

The massed foliage constituted an impenetrable wall on either side. Everywhere his eyes met a maze of *lianas,* creeping plants, begonias, and bizarre vegetable forms, shapes and hues of which he had never before had any adequate conception. Often he caught the glint of great, rare butterflies hovering in the early sunlight which filtered through the interlaced fronds and branches. Often when the boat hugged the bank he saw indescribable buds and blossoms, and multicolored orchids clinging to the drooping *bejucos* which festooned the enormous trees. As the afternoon waned and the sun hung low, the magic stillness of the solitude began to cast its spell about him, and he could imagine that he was penetrating a fairyland. The vast stream, winding, broadening, ramifying round wooded islets, throwing out long, dusky lagoons and swampy arms, incessantly plying its numberless activities, at length held him enraptured. As he brooded over it all, his thought wandered back to the exploits of the intrepid Quesada and his stalwart band who, centuries before, had forced their perilous way along this same river, amid showers of poisoned

arrows from hostile natives, amid the assaults of tropical storms and malarial fevers, to the plateau of Cundinamarca, the home of the primitive Muiscas; and there gathering fresh strength and inspiration, had pushed on to the site of Santa Fé de Bogotá.

A cry suddenly rang through the boat. "Man overboard!"

The clang of the pilot's bell stopped the clumsy craft; but not before the ragged little negro boy who had served at José's table as steward had been swept far away by the rapid current.

The utmost confusion immediately prevailed. Every one of the rabble rout of stokers, stewards, and stevedores lost his wits and set up a frenzied yell. Some who remembered that there was such a thing, tore at the ropes which held the single lifeboat. But the boat had been put on for appearance's sake, not for service, and successfully resisted all efforts at removal. No one dared risk his life in attempted rescue, for the river swarmed with crocodiles. There was vain racing, counseling and gesticulating; but at length, the first wave of excitement over, passengers and crew settled down to watch the outcome of the boy's struggle for life, while the pilot endeavored to turn the unwieldy steamer about.

"Now is the time to put up a prayer for the youngster, Padre," said a voice behind José.

The priest turned. The speaker was evidently a native Colombian. José had noticed him on the boat when he embarked at Calamar, and surmised that he had probably come up from Barranquilla.

"An excellent opportunity to try the merits of a prayer to the Virgin, no? If she can fish us out of purgatory she ought to pull this boy out of the river, eh?" continued the speaker with a cynical smile.

"I would rather trust to a canoe and a pair of stout arms than a prayer at present," returned José with candor.

"Corriente!" replied the man; "my way of thinking, exactly! But if I had a good rifle now I'd put that little fellow out of his misery, for he's going down, sure!"

It was not unkindly said; and José appreciated the man's rude sentiment. Minutes passed in strained silence.

"Hombre!" cried the man. "He's going!"

The lad was evidently weakening. The rapid, swirling current continually frustrated his efforts to reach the shore. Again the head went under.

"Dios!" José exclaimed. "Is there no help?"

Jesus had walked the waves. Yet here his earthly representative, trained in all the learning and culture of Holy Church to be an *Alter Christus,* stood helplessly by and watched a

child drown! God above! what avail religious creed and churchly dogma? How impotent the beliefs of men in such an hour! Could the Holy Father himself, with all his assumptions, spiritual and temporal—with all his power to loose from sin and from the imaginary torments of purgatory—save this drowning boy?

José turned away in bitterness of heart. As he did so a murmur of awe arose from the spectators. The priest looked again down the river. Impelled from below, the body of the boy was hurled out of the water. Then, as it fell, it disappeared.

"Cayman!" gasped the horrified crew.

José stood spellbound, as the ghastly truth dawned upon him. A crocodile, gliding beneath the struggling lad, had tossed him upward, and caught him in its loathsome jaws when he fell. Then it had dragged him beneath the yellow waters, where he was seen no more.

Life is held cheaply by the Magdalena negro—excepting his own. Shiftless and improvident child of the tropics, his animal wants are readily satisfied by the fruits and fish which nature provides for him so bountifully. Spiritual wants he has none—until calamity touches him and he thinks he is about to die. Then witchcraft, charm, incantation, the priest—anything that promises help is hurriedly pressed into requisition to prolong his useless existence. If he recovers, he forgets it all as hurriedly. The tragedy which had just been enacted before the Honda's crew produced a ripple of excitement—a momentary stirring of emotion—and was then speedily forgotten, while the boat turned and drove its way up-stream against the muddy waters.

But José could not forget. Nature had endowed him with a memory which recorded as minutely and as lastingly as the phonographic cylinder. The violent death of the boy haunted him, and mingled with the recurrent memories of the sad passing of the little Maria, and his own bitter life experience. Oh, the mystery of it all! The tragedy of life! The sudden blighting of hopes! The ruthless crushing of hearts! What did it mean? Did this infinite variety of good and evil which we call life unite to manifest an infinite Creator? Nay, for then were God more wicked than the lowest sinner! Was evil as real as good, and more powerful? Yes. Did love and the soul's desire to be and do good count for nothing in the end? No; for the end is death—always death! And after that—who knows?

"We are coming to Banco, Padre," said the man who had addressed José before, rousing him from his doleful medita-

tions and pointing to the lights of the distant town, now shimmering through the gathering dusk.

As the boat with shrilly shrieking whistle drew near the landing, a crowd hurriedly gathered on the bank to receive it. Venders of guava jelly, rude pottery, and straw mats hastily spread out their merchandise on the muddy ground and began to dilate loudly on their merits. A scantily clad man held aloft a rare leopard skin, which he vigorously offered for two *pesos* gold. Slatternly women, peddling queer delectables of uncertain composition, waved their thin, bare arms and shrilly advertised their wares. Black, naked children bobbed excitedly about; and gaunt dogs and shrieking pigs scampered recklessly through the crowd and added to the general confusion. Here and there José could see dignified looking men, dressed in white cotton, and wearing straw—*jipijapa*—hats. These were merchants, patiently awaiting consignments which they had perhaps ordered months before. Crazy, ramshackle dwellings, perched unsteadily upon long, slender stilts, rose from the water's edge; but substantial brick buildings of fair size, with red-tile roofs and whitewashed walls, mingled at intervals with the thatched mud huts and rude hovels farther within the town. In a distant doorway he descried a woman nursing a babe at one breast and a suckling pig at the other. Convention is rigid in these Colombian river towns; but it is widely inclusive.

"Come ashore with me, Padre, and forget what is worrying you," said José's new acquaintance, taking him by the arm. "I have friends here—*Hola!* Padre Diego Guillermo!" he suddenly called, catching sight of a black-frocked priest standing in the crowd on the shore.

The priest addressed, a short, stout, coarse-featured man of perhaps forty, waved back a vigorous salutation.

"*Hombre!*" the man ejaculated, holding José's arm and starting down the gangplank. "What new deviltry is the rogue up to now!"

The man and the priest addressed as Diego embraced warmly.

"Padre Diego Guillermo Polo, I have the extreme honor to present my friend, the eminent Padre—" ceremoniously waving a hand toward José.

"José de Rincón," supplied the latter, bowing.

"Rincón!" murmured the priest Diego. Then, abruptly, "Of Cartagena?"

"Yes," returned José, with awakened interest.

"Not of Don Ignacio—?"

"My grandfather," José replied promptly, and with a touch of pride.

"Ha! he owned much property—many *fincas*—about here; and farther west, in the Guamocó country, many mines, eh, Don Jorge?" exchanging a significant look with the latter.

"But," he added, glancing at the perspiring Honda, "this old tub is going to hang up here for the night. So do me the honor, señores, to visit my little cell, and we will fight the cursed mosquitoes over a sip of red rum. I have some of very excellent quality."

José and Don Jorge bowed their acquiescence and followed him up the muddy road. The cell referred to consisted of a suite of several rooms, commodiously furnished, and looking out from the second story of one of the better colonial houses of the town upon a richly blooming interior *patio*. As the visitors entered, a comely young woman who had just lighted an oil-burning "student" lamp and placed it upon the center table, disappeared into one of the more remote rooms.

"My niece," said the priest Diego, winking at Don Jorge as he set out cigars and a *garrafon* of Jamaica rum. "I have ordered a case of American beer," he continued, lighting a cigar. "But that was two months ago, and it hasn't arrived yet. *Diablo!* but the good *médico* tells me I drink too much rum for this very Christian climate."

Don Jorge swept the place with an appraising glance. "H'm," he commented, as he poured himself a liberal libation from the *garrafon*. "The Lord surely provides for His faithful children."

"Yes, the Lord, that's right," laughed Padre Diego; "still I am daily rendering no small thanks to His Grace, Don Wenceslas, future Bishop of Cartagena."

"And eminent services into the bargain, I'll venture," added Don Jorge.

Padre Diego's eyes twinkled merrily. José started. Then even in this remote town the artful Wenceslas maintained his agent!

"But our friend is neither drinking nor smoking," said Padre Diego, turning inquiringly to José, who had left his glass untouched.

"With your permission," replied the latter; "I do not use liquor or tobacco."

"Nor women either, eh?" laughed Padre Diego. "*Por Dios!* what is it the Dutchman says?

'Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Lebenlang.'

Caramba! but my German has all slipped from me."

"Don't worry," commented Don Jorge cynically; "for I'll wager it took nothing good with it."

"Hombre! but you are hard on a loyal servant of the Lord," exclaimed Padre Diego in a tone of mock injury, as he drained another glass of the fiery liquor.

"Servant of the Lord!" guffawed Don Jorge. "Of the Lord Pope, Lord Wenceslas, or the Lord God, may we ask?"

"Qué chiste! Why, stupid, all three. I do not put all my eggs into one basket, however large. But tell me, now," he inquired, turning the conversation from himself, "what is it brings you into this region forsaken of the gods?"

"Sepulcros," Don Jorge briefly announced.

"Ha! Indian graves again! But have you abandoned your quest of *La Tumba del Diablo,* in the Sinu valley?"

"Naturally, since the records show that it was opened centuries ago. And I spent a good year's search on it, too! *Dios!* They say it yielded above thirty thousand *pesos* gold."

"Diablo!"

"But I am on the track of others. I go now to Medellin; then to Remedios; and there outfit for a trip of grave hunting through the old Guamocó district."

"Guamocó! Then you will naturally come down the Simití trail, which brings you out to the Magdalena."

"Simití?" interrupted José eagerly, turning to the speaker. "Do you know the place?"

"Somewhat!" replied Padre Diego, laughing. "I had charge of that parish for a few months—"

"But found it highly convenient to leave, no?" finished the merciless Don Jorge.

"Caramba! Would you have me die of *ennui* in such a hell-hole?" cried Diego with some aspersion.

"Hell-hole!" echoed José. "Is it so bad as that?"

"Hombre! Yes—worse! They say that after the good Lord created heaven and earth He had a few handfuls of dirt left, and these He threw away. But crafty Satan, always with an eye single to going the Lord one better, slyly gathered this dirt together again and made Simití." Diego quickly finished another glass of rum, as if he would drown the memory of the town.

José's heart slowly sank under the words.

"But why do you ask? You are not going there?" Padre Diego inquired. José nodded an affirmative.

"Diablo! Assigned?"

"Yes," in a voice scarcely audible.

The Padre whistled softly. "Then in that case," he said, brightening, "we are brother sinners. So let us exchange confidences. What was your crime, if one may ask?"

"Crime!" exclaimed José in amazement.

"Aye; who was she? Rich? Beautiful? Native? Or foreign? Come, the story. We have a long night before us." And the coarse fellow settled back expectantly in his chair.

José paled. "What do you mean?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"Caramba!" returned the Padre impatiently. "You surely know that no respectable priest is ever sent to Simití! That it is the good Bishop's penal colony for fallen clergy—and, I may add, the refuge of political offenders of this and adjacent countries. Why, the present schoolmaster there is a political outcast from Salvador!"

"No, I did not know it," replied José.

"Por Dios! Then you are being jobbed, *amigo!* Did Don Wenceslas give you letters to the Alcalde?"

"Yes."

"And—by the way, has Wenceslas been misbehaving of late?—for when he does, somebody other than himself has to settle the score."

José remained silent.

"Ah," mused Diego, "but Don Wenceslas is artful. And yet, I think I see the direction of his trained hand in this." Then he burst into a rude laugh. "Come, *amigo,"* he said, noting José's dejected mien; "let us have your story. We may be able to advise. And we've had experience—eh, Don Jorge?"

But José slowly shook his head. What mattered it now? Simití would serve as well to bury him as any other tomb. He knew he was sent as a lamb to the slaughter. But it was his affair—and his God's. Honor and conscience had presented the score; and he was paying in full. His was not a story to be bandied about by lewd priests like Padre Diego.

"No," he replied to the Padre's insistent solicitations; "with your permission, we will talk of it no more."

"But—*Hombre!"* cried the Padre at last, in his coarse way stirred by José's evident truthfulness. "Well—as you wish—I will not pry into your secrets. But, take a bit of counsel from one who knows: when you reach Simití, inquire for a man who hates me, one Rosendo Ariza—"

At this juncture the Honda's diabolical whistle pierced the murky night air.

"Caramba!" cried Don Jorge, starting up. "Are they going to try the river to-night?" And the men hurried back to the landing.

The moon was up, and the boat was getting under way. Padre Diego went aboard to take leave of his friends.

"Bien, amigo," he said to Don Jorge; "I am sorry your stay is so short. I had much to tell you. Interesting developments

are forward, and I hope you are well out of Guamocó when the trouble starts. For the rivals of Antioquia and Simití will pay off a few scores in the next revolution—a few left over from the last; and it would be well not to get caught between them when they come together."

"And so it is coming?" said Don Jorge thoughtfully.

"Coming! *Hombre!* It is all but here! The Hercules went up-river yesterday. You will pass her. She has gone to keep a look-out in the vicinity of Puerto Berrio. I am sorry for our friend," nodding toward José, who was leaning over the boat's rail at some distance; "but there is a job there. He doesn't belong in this country. And Simití will finish him."

"Bah! only another priest less—and a weak-kneed one at that," said Don Jorge with contempt; "and we have too many of them now, Lord knows!"

"You forget that I am a priest," chuckled Diego.

"You! Yes, so you are," laughed Don Jorge; "but of the diocese of hell! Well, we're off. I'll send a runner down the trail when I reach the Tiguí river; and if you will have a letter in Simití informing me of the status of things political, he can bring it up. *Conque, adios,* my consummate villain."

The Honda, whistling prodigiously, swung out into mid-stream and set her course up-river, warily feeling through the velvety darkness for the uncertain channel. Once she grated over a hidden bar and hung for a few moments, while her stack vomited torrents of sparks and her great wheel angrily churned the water into creamy foam in the clear moonlight. Once, rounding a sharp bend, she collided squarely with a huge mahogany tree, rolling and plunging menacingly in the seaward rushing waters.

"*Diablo!*" muttered Don Jorge, as he helped José swing his hammock and adjust the mosquito netting. "I shall offer a candle a foot thick to the blessed Virgin if I reach Puerto Berrio safely! *Santo Dios!*" as the boat grazed another sand bar. "I've heard tell of steamers hanging up on bars in this river for six weeks! And look!" pointing to the projecting smoke-stack of a sunken steamer. "*Caramba!* That is what we just escaped!"

But José manifested slight interest in the dangers of river navigation. His thoughts were revolving about the incidents of the past few days, and, more especially, about Padre Diego and his significant words. Don Jorge had volunteered no further explanation of the man or his conversation; and José's reticence would not permit him to make other inquiry. But, after all, his thought-processes always evolved the same conclusion: What mattered it now? His interest in life was at

an end. He had not told Don Jorge of his experience with the leper in Maganguey. He was trying to forget it. But his hand ached cruelly; and the pain was always associated with loathsome and repellant thoughts of the event.

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The eastern sky was blushing at the approach of the amorous sun when José left his hammock and prepared to endure another day on the river. To the south the deep blue vault of heaven was dotted with downy clouds. Behind the laboring steamer the river glittered through a dazzling white haze. Ahead, its course was traceable for miles by the thin vapor always rising from it. The jungle on either side was brilliant with color and resonant with the songs of forest lyrists. In the lofty fronds of venerable palms and cedars noisy macaws gossiped and squabbled, and excited monkeys discussed the passing boat and commented volubly on its character. In the shallow water at the margin of the river blue herons and spindle-legged cranes were searching out their morning meal. Crocodiles lay dozing on the *playas*, with mouths opened invitingly to the stupid birds which were sure to yield to the mesmerism. Far in the distance up-stream a young deer was drinking at the water's edge.

The charm of the rare scene held the priest spellbound. As he gazed upon it a king vulture—called by the natives the Vulture Papa, or Pope Vulture—suddenly swooped down from the depths of heaven and, lighting upon the carcass of a monster crocodile floating down the river, began to feast upon the choicest morsels, while the buzzards which had been circling about the carrion and feeding at will respectfully withdrew until the royal appetite should be satiated.

"Holy graft, eh, Padre?" commented Don Jorge, coming up. "Those brainless buzzards, if they only knew it and had sense enough to unite, could strip every feather off that swaggering vulture and send him packing. Fools! And we poor Colombians, if we had the courage, could as easily throw the Church into the sea, holy candles, holy oils, holy incense and all! *Diablo!* But we are fleeced like sheep!"

To José it did not seem strange that this man should speak so frankly to him, a priest. He felt that Don Jorge was not so much lacking in courtesy and delicate respect for the feelings and opinions of others as he was ruggedly honest and fearlessly sincere in his hatred of the dissimulation and graft practiced upon the ignorant and unsuspecting. For the rest of the day Don Jorge was busy with his maps and papers, and José was left to himself.

The character of the landscape had altered with the nar-

rowing of the stream, and the river-plain now lay in a great volcanic basin flanked by distant verdure-clad hills. Far to the southwest José could see the faint outlines of the lofty *Cordilleras*. Somewhere in that direction lay Simití. And back of it lay the ancient treasure house of Spain, where countless thousands of sweating slaves had worn out their straining bodies under the goad and lash, that the monarchs of Castile might carry on their foolish religious wars and attempt their vain projects of self-aggrandizement.

The day wore on without interest, and darkness closed in quickly when the sun dropped behind the *Sierras*. It was to be José's last night on the Magdalena, for the captain had told him that, barring disaster, the next afternoon should find them at Badillo. After the evening meal the priest took his chair to the bow of the steamer and gave himself over to the gentle influences of the rare and soothing environment. The churning of the boat was softly echoed by the sleeping forest. The late moon shimmered through clouds of murky vapor, and cast ghostly reflections along the broad river. The balmy air, trembling with the radiating heat, was impregnated with sweetest odors from the myriad buds and balsamic plants of the dark jungle wilderness on either hand, where impervious walls rose in majestic, deterrant, awesome silence from the low shore line, and tangled shrubs and bushes, rioting in wild profusion, jealously hung to the water's edge that they might hide every trace of the muddy banks. What shapes and forms the black depths of that untrodden bush hid from his eyes, José might only imagine. But he felt their presence—crawling, creeping things that lay in patient ambush for their unwitting prey—slimy lizards, gorgeously caparisoned—dank, twisting serpents—elephantine tapirs—dull-witted sloths—sleek, wary jaguars—fierce formicidae, poisonous and carnivorous. He might not see them, but he felt that he was the cynosure of hundreds of keen eyes that followed him as the boat glided close to the shore and silently crept through the shadows which lay thick upon the river's edge. And the matted jungle, with its colossal vegetation, he felt was peopled with other things—influences intangible, and perhaps still unreal, but mightily potent with the symbolized presence of the great Unknown, which stands back of all phenomena and eagerly watches the movements of its children. These influences had already cast their spell upon him. He was yielding, slowly, to the "lure of the tropics," which few who come under its attachment ever find the strength to dispel.

No habitations were visible on the dark shores. Only here and there in the yellow glow of the boat's lanterns appeared the

customary piles of wood which the natives sell to the passing steamers for boiler fuel, and which are found at frequent intervals along the river. At one of these the Honda halted to replenish its supply. The usual bickering between the negro owner and the boat captain resulted in a bargain, and the half-naked stevedores began to transfer the wood to the vessel, carrying it on their shoulders in the most primitive manner, held in a strip of burlap. The rising moon had at last thrown off its veil of murky clouds, and was shining in undimmed splendor in a starry sky. José went ashore with the passengers; for the boat might remain there for hours while her crew labored leisurely, with much bantering and singing, and no anxious thought for the morrow.

The strumming of a *tiple* in the distance attracted him. Following it, he found a small settlement of bamboo huts hidden away in a beautiful grove of moriche palms, through which the moonbeams filtered in silvery stringers. Little gardens lay back of the dwellings, and the usual number of goats and pigs were dozing in the heavy shadows of the scarcely stirring trees. Reserved matrons and shy *doncellas* appeared in the doorways; and curious children, naked and chubby, hid in their mothers' scant skirts and peeped cautiously out at the newcomers. The tranquil night was sweet with delicate odors wafted from numberless plants and blossoms in the adjacent forest, and with the fragrance breathed from the roses, gardenias and dahlias with which these unpretentious dwellings were fairly embowered. A spirit of calm and peaceful contentment hovered over the spot, and the round, white moon smiled down in holy benediction upon the gentle folk who passed their simple lives in this bower of delight, free from the goad of human ambition, untrammeled by the false sense of wealth and its entailments, and unspoiled by the artificialities of civilization.

One of the passengers suggested a dance, while waiting for the boat to take on its fuel. The owner of the wood, apparently the chief authority of the little settlement, immediately procured a *tom-tom*, and gave orders for the *baile*. At his direction men, women and children gathered in the moonlit clearing on the river bank and, while the musician beat a monotonous tattoo on the crude drum, circled about in the stately and dignified movements of their native dance.

It was a picture that José would not forget. The balmy air, soft as velvet, and laden with delicious fragrance; the vast solitude, stretching in trackless wilderness to unknown reaches on either hand; the magic stillness of the tropic night; the figures of the dancers weirdly silhouetted in the gorgeous moonlight; with the low, unvaried beat of the *tom-tom* rising dully

through the warm air—all merged into a scene of exquisite beauty and delight, which made an indelible impression upon the priest's receptive mind.

And when the sounds of simple happiness had again died into silence, and he lay in his hammock, listening to the spirit of the jungle sighing through the night-blown palms, as the boat glided gently through the lights and shadows of the quiet river, his soul voiced a nameless yearning, a vague, unformed longing for an approach to the life of simple content and childlike happiness of the kind and gentle folk with whom he had been privileged to make this brief sojourn.

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The crimson flush of the dawn-sky heralded another day of implacable heat. The emerald coronals of palms and towering *caobas* burned in the early beams of the torrid sun. Light fogs rose reluctantly from the river's bosom and dispersed in delicate vapors of opal and violet. The tangled banks of dripping bush shone freshly green in the misty light. The wilderness, grim and trenchant, reigned in unchallenged despotism. Solitude, soul-oppressing, unbroken but for the calls of feathered life, brooded over the birth of José's last day on the Magdalena. About midday the steamer touched at the little village of Bodega Central; but the iron-covered warehouse and the whitewashed mud hovels glittered garishly in the fierce heat and stifled all desire to go ashore. The call was brief, and the boat soon resumed its course through the solitude and heat of the mighty river.

Immediately after leaving Bodega Central, Don Jorge approached José and beckoned him to an unoccupied corner of the boat.

"*Amigo*," he began, after assuring himself that his words would not carry to the other passengers, "the captain tells me the next stop is Badillo, where you leave us. If all goes well you will be in Simití to-night. No doubt a report of our meeting with Padre Diego has already reached Don Wenceslas, who, you may be sure, has no thought of forgetting you. I have no reason to tell you this other than the fact that I think, as Padre Diego put it, you are being jobbed—not by the Church, but by Wenceslas. I want to warn you, that is all. I hate priests! They got me early—got my wife and girl, too! I hate the Church, and the whole ghastly farce which it puts over on the ignorant people of this country! But—," eying him sharply, "I would hardly class you as a *real* priest. There, never mind!" as José was about to interrupt. "I think I understand. You simply went wrong. You meant well, but something happened —as always does when one means well in this world. But now to the point."

Shifting his chair closer to José, the man resumed earnestly.

"Your grandfather, Don Ignacio, was a very rich man. The war stripped him. He got just what he deserved. His *fincas* and herds and mines melted away from him like grease from a holy candle. And nobody cared—any more than the Lord cares about candle grease. Most of his property fell into the hands of his former slaves—and he had hundreds of them hereabouts. But his most valuable possession, the great mine of La Libertad, disappeared as completely as if blotted from the face of the earth.

"That mine—no, not a mine, but a mountain of free gold—was located somewhere in the Guamocó district. After the war this whole country slipped back into the jungle, and had to be rediscovered. The Guamocó region is to-day as unknown as it was before the Spaniards came. Somewhere in the district, but covered deep beneath brush and forest growth, is that mine, the richest in Colombia.

"Now, as you know, Don Ignacio left this country in considerable of a hurry. But I think he always intended to come back again. Death killed that ambition. I don't know about his sons. But the fact remains that La Libertad has never been rediscovered since Don Ignacio's day. The old records in Cartagena show the existence of such a mine in Spanish times, and give a more or less accurate statement of its production. *Diablo!* I hesitate to say how much! The old fellow had *arrastras*, mills, and so on, in which slaves crushed the ore. The bullion was melted into bars and brought down the trail to Simití, where he had agents and warehouses and a store or two. From there it was shipped down the river to Cartagena. But the war lasted thirteen years. And during that time everything was in a state of terrible confusion. The existence of mines was forgotten. The plantations were left unworked. The male population was all but killed off. And the country sank back into wilderness.

"*Bueno;* so much for history. Now to your friends on the coast—and elsewhere. Don Wenceslas is quietly searching for that mine—has been for years. He put his agent, Padre Diego, in Simití to learn what he might there. But the fool priest was run out after he had ruined a woman or two. However, Padre Diego is still in close touch with the town, and is on the keen search for La Libertad. Wenceslas thinks there may be descendants of some of Don Ignacio's old slaves still living in Simití, or near there, and that they know the location of the lost mine. And, if I mistake not, he figures that you will learn the secret from them in some way, and that the mine will again come to light. Now, if you get wind of that mine and attempt

to locate it, or purchase it from the natives, you will be beaten out of it in a hurry. And you may be sure Don Wenceslas will be the one who will eventually have it, for there is no craftier, smoother, brighter rascal in Colombia than he. And so, take it from me, if you ever get wind of the location of that famous property—which by rights is yours, having belonged to your grandfather—*keep the information strictly to yourself!*

"I do not know Simití. But I shall be working in the Guamocó district for many months to come, hunting Indian graves. I shall have my runners up and down the Simití trail frequently, and may get in touch with you. It may be that you will need a friend. There! The boat is whistling for Badillo. A last word: Keep out of the way of both Wenceslas and Diego—cultivate the people of Simití—and keep your mouth closed."

A few minutes later José stood on the river bank beside his little haircloth trunk and traveling bag, sadly watching the steamer draw away and resume her course up-stream. He watched it until it disappeared around a bend. And then he stood watching the smoke rise above the treetops, until that, too, faded in the distance. No one had waved him a farewell from the boat. No one met him with a greeting of welcome on the shore. He was a stranger among strangers.

He turned, with a heavy heart, to note his environment. It was a typical riverine point. A single street, if it might be so called; a half dozen bamboo dwellings, palm-thatched; and a score of natives, with their innumerable gaunt dogs and porcine companions—this was Badillo.

"Señor Padre." A tall, finely built native, clad in soiled white cotton shirt and trousers, approached and addressed him in a kindly tone. "Where do you go?"

"To Simití," replied the priest, turning eagerly to the man. "But," in bewilderment, "where is it?"

"Over there," answered the native, pointing to the jungle on the far side of the river. "Many leagues."

The wearied priest sat down on his trunk and buried his face in his hands. Faintness and nausea seized him. It was the after-effect of his long and difficult river experience. Or, perhaps, the deadly malaria was beginning its insidious poisoning. The man approached and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Padre, why do you go to Simití?"

José raised his head and looked more closely at his interlocutor. The native was a man of perhaps sixty years. His figure was that of an athlete. He stood well over six feet high, with massive shoulders, and a waist as slender as a woman's. His face was almost black in color, and mottled with patches of white, so common to the natives of the hot inlands. But there

was that in its expression, a something that looked out through those kindly black eyes, that assured José and bespoke his confidence.

The man gravely repeated his question.

"I have been sent there by the Bishop of Cartagena. I am to have charge of the parish," José replied.

The man slowly shook his finely shaped head.

"We want no priest in Simití," he said with quiet firmness. His manner of speaking was abrupt, yet not ungracious.

"But—do you live there?" inquired José anxiously.

"Yes, Padre."

"Then you must know a man—Rosendo, I think his name—"

"I am Rosendo Ariza."

José looked eagerly at the man. Then he wearily stretched out a hand.

"Rosendo—I am sick—I think. And—I have—no friends—"

Rosendo quickly grasped his hand and slipped an arm about his shoulders.

"I am your friend, Padre—" He stopped and appeared to reflect for a moment. Then he added quickly, "My canoe is ready; and we must hurry, or night will overtake us."

The priest essayed to rise, but stumbled. Then, as if he had been a child, the man Rosendo picked him up and carried him down the bank to a rude canoe, where he deposited him on a pile of empty bags in the keel.

"Escolastico!" he called back to a young man who seemed to be the chief character of the village. "Sell the *panela* and yuccas *á buen precio;* and remind Captain Julio not to forget on the next trip to bring the little Carmen a doll from Barranquilla. I will be over again next month. And Juan," addressing the sturdy youth who was preparing to accompany him, "set in the Padre's baggage; and do you take the paddle, and I will pole. *Conque, adioscito!*" waving his battered straw hat to the natives congregated on the bank, while Juan pushed the canoe from the shore and paddled vigorously out into the river.

"Adioscito! adioscito! Don Rosendo y Juan!" The hearty farewells of the natives followed the canoe far out into the broad stream.

Across the open river in the livid heat of the early afternoon the canoe slowly made its way. The sun from a cloudless sky viciously poured down its glowing rays like molten metal. The boat burned; the river steamed; the water was hot to his touch, when the priest feebly dipped his hands into it and bathed his throbbing brow. Badillo faded from view as they rounded a

densely wooded island and entered a long lagoon. Here they lost the slight breeze which they had had on the main stream. In this narrow channel, hemmed in between lofty forest walls of closely woven vines and foliage, it seemed to José that they had entered a flaming inferno. The two boatmen sat silent and inscrutable, plying their paddles without speaking.

Down the long lagoon the canoe drifted, keeping within what scant shade the banks afforded, for the sun stood now directly overhead. The heat was everywhere, insistent, unpitying. It burned, scalded, warped. The foliage on either side of the channel merged into the hot waves that rose trembling about them. The thin, burning air enveloped the little craft with fire. José gasped for breath. His tongue swelled. His pulse throbbed violently. His skin cracked. The quivering appearance of the atmosphere robbed him of confidence in his own vision. A cloud of insects hung always before his sight. Dead silence lay upon the scene. Not a sound issued from the jungle. Not a bird or animal betrayed its presence. The canoe was edging the Colombian "hells," where even the denizens of the forest dare not venture forth on the low, open *savannas* in the killing heat of midday.

José sank down in the boat, wilting and semi-delirious. Through his dimmed eyes the boatmen looked like glowing inhuman things set in flames. Rosendo came to him and placed his straw hat over his face. Hours, interminable and torturing, seemed to pass on leaden wings. Then Juan, deftly swerving his paddle, shot the canoe into a narrow arm, and the garish sunlight was suddenly lost in the densely intertwined branches overhanging the little stream.

"The outlet of *La Cienaga*, Padre," Rosendo offered, laying aside his paddle and taking his long boat pole. "Lake Simití flows through this and into the Magdalena." For a few moments he held the canoe steady, while from his wallet he drew a few leaves of tobacco and deftly rolled a long, thick cigar.

The real work of the *boga* now began, and Rosendo with his long punter settled down to the several hours' strenuous grind which was necessary to force the heavy canoe up the little outlet and into the distant lake beyond. Back and forth he traveled through the half-length of the boat, setting the pole well forward in the soft bank, or out into the stream itself, and then, with its end against his shoulder, urging and teasing the craft a few feet at a time against the strong current. José imagined, as he dully watched him, that he could see death in the pestiferous effluvia which emanated from the black, slimy mud which every plunge of the long pole brought to the surface of the narrow stream.

The afternoon slowly waned, and the temperature lowered a few degrees. A warm, animal-like breath drifted languidly out from the moist jungle. The outlet, or *caño*, was heavily shaded throughout its length. Crocodiles lay along its muddy banks, and slid into the water at the approach of the canoe. Huge *iguanas*, the gorgeously colored lizards of tropical America, scurried noisily through the overarching branches. Here and there monkeys peeped curiously at the intruders and chattered excitedly as they swung among the lofty treetops. But for his exhaustion, José, as he lay propped up against his trunk, gazing vacantly upon the slowly unrolling panorama of marvelous plant and animal life on either hand, might have imagined himself in a realm of enchantment.

At length the vegetation abruptly ceased; the stream widened; and the canoe entered a broad lake, at the far end of which, three miles distant, its two whitewashed churches and its plastered houses reflecting the red glow of the setting sun, lay the ancient and decayed town of Simití, the northern outlet of Spain's mediaeval treasure house, at the edge of the forgotten district of Guamocó.

Paddling gently across the unruffled surface of the tepid waters, Rosendo and Juan silently urged the canoe through the fast gathering dusk, and at length drew up on the shaly beach of the old town. As they did so, a little girl, bare of feet and with clustering brown curls, came running out of the darkness.

"Oh, padre Rosendo," she called, "what have you brought me?"

Then, as she saw Rosendo and Juan assisting the priest from the boat, she drew back abashed.

"Look, Carmencita," whispered Juan to the little maid; "we've brought you a *big* doll, haven't we?"

Night fell as the priest stepped upon the shore of his new home.

CARMEN ARIZA

BOOK 2

AY, to save and redeem and restore, snatch Saul, the mistake, Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake from the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet to be run and continued and ended.

—Browning.

CARMEN ARIZA

CHAPTER 1

JOSÉ DE RINCÓN opened his eyes and turned painfully on his hard bed. The early sun streamed through the wooden grating before the unglazed window. A slight, tepid breeze stirred the mosquito netting over him. He was in the single sleeping room of the house. It contained another bed like his own, of rough *macana* palm strips, over which lay a straw mat and a thin red blanket. Bed springs were unknown in Simití. On the rude door, cobwebbed and dusty, a scorpion clung torpidly. From the room beyond he heard subdued voices. His head and limbs ached dully; and frightful memories of the river trip and the awful journey from Badillo sickened him. With painful exertion he stood upon the moist dirt floor and drew on his damp clothes. He had only a vague recollection of the preceding night, but he knew that Rosendo had half led, half dragged him past rows of dimly lighted, ghostly white houses to his own abode, and there had put him to bed.

"Muy buenos dias, Señor Padre," Rosendo greeted him, as the priest dragged himself out into the living room. "You have slept long. But the señora will soon have your breakfast. Sit here—not in the sun!"

Rosendo placed one of the rough wooden chairs, with straight cowhide back and seat, near the table.

"Carmencita has gone to the boat for fresh water. But—here she comes. Pour the *Señor Padre* a cup, *carita,"* addressing a little girl who at that moment entered the doorway, carrying a large earthen bottle on her shoulder. It was the child who had met the boat when the priest arrived the night before.

"Fill the basin, too, *chiquita,* that the Padre may wash his hands," added Rosendo.

The child approached José, and with a dignified little courtesy and a frank smile offered him a cup of the lukewarm water. The priest accepted it languidly. But, glancing into her face, his eyes suddenly widened, and the hand that was carrying the tin cup to his lips stopped.

The barefoot girl, clad only in a short, sleeveless calico gown, stood before him like a portrait from an old master. Her skin was almost white, with but a tinge of olive. Her dark brown hair hung in curls to her shoulders and framed a face of rarest beauty. Innocence, purity, and love radiated from her fair features, from her beautifully rounded limbs, from her soft, dark eyes that looked so fearlessly into his own.

José felt himself strangely moved. Somewhere deep within his soul a chord had been suddenly struck by the little presence; and the sound was unfamiliar to him. Yet it awakened memories of distant scenes, of old dreams, and forgotten longings. It seemed to echo from realms of his soul that had never been penetrated. The tumult within died away. The raging thought sank into calm. The man forgot himself, forgot that he had come to Simiti to die. His sorrow vanished. His sufferings faded. He remained conscious only of something that he could not outline, something in the soul of the child, a thing that perhaps he once possessed, and that he knew he yet prized above all else on earth.

He heard Rosendo's voice through an immeasurable distance—

"Leave us now, *chiquita;* the Padre wishes to have his breakfast."

The child without speaking turned obediently; and the priest's eyes followed her until she disappeared into the kitchen.

"We call her 'the smile of God,'" said Rosendo, noting the priest's absorption, "because she is always happy."

José remained sunk in thought. Then—

"A beautiful child!" he murmured. "A wonderfully beautiful child! I had no idea—!"

"Yes, Padre, she is heaven's gift to us poor folk. I sometimes think the angels themselves left her on the river bank."

"On the river bank!" José was awake now. "Why—she was not born here?"

"Oh, no, Padre, but in Badillo."

"Ah, then you once lived in Badillo?"

"*Na, Señor Padre,* she is not my child—except that the good God has given her to me to protect."

"Not your child! Then whose is she?" The priest's voice was unwontedly eager and his manner animated.

But Rosendo fell suddenly quiet and embarrassed, as if he realized that already he had said too much to a stranger. A shade of suspicion seemed to cross his face, and he rose hurriedly and went out into the kitchen. A moment later he returned with the priest's breakfast—two fried eggs, a hot corn *arepa,* fried *platanos,* dried fish, and coffee sweetened with *panela.*

"When you have finished, Padre, we will visit the Alcalde," he said quietly. "I must go down to the lake now to speak with Juan before he goes out to fish."

José finished his meal alone. The interest which had been aroused by the child continued to increase without reaction. His torpid soul had been profoundly stirred. For the moment, though he knew not why, life seemed to hold a vague, unshaped interest for him. He began to notice his environment; he even thought he relished the coarse food set before him.

The house he was in was a typical native three-room dwelling, built of strips of *macana* palm, set upright and tied together with pieces of slender, tough *bejuco* vine. The interstices between the strips were filled with mud, and the whole whitewashed. The floors were dirt, trodden hard; the steep-pitched roof was thatched with palm. A few chairs like the one he occupied, the rude, uncovered table, some cheap prints and a battered crucifix on the wall, were the only furnishings of the living room.

While he was eating, the people of the town congregated quietly about the open door. Friendly curiosity to see the new Padre, and sincere desire to welcome him animated their simple minds. Naked babes crawled to the threshold and peeped timidly in. Coarsely clad women and young girls, many of the latter bedizened with bits of bright ribbon or cheap trinkets, smiled their gentle greetings. Black, dignified men, bare of feet, and wearing white cotton trousers and black *ruanas*—the cape affected by the poor males of the inlands—respectfully doffed their straw hats and bowed to him. Rosendo's wife appeared from the kitchen and extended her hand to him in unfeigned hospitality. Attired in a fresh calico gown, her black hair plastered back over her head and tied with a clean black ribbon, her bare feet encased in hemp sandals, she bore herself with that grace and matronly dignity so indicative of her Spanish forbears, and so particularly characteristic of the inhabitants of this "valley of the pleasant 'yes.'"

Breakfast finished, the priest stepped to the doorway and raised his hand in the invocation that was evidently expected from him.

"Dominus vobiscum," he repeated, not mechanically, not insincerely, but in a spirit of benevolence, of genuine well-wishing, which his contact with the child a few minutes before seemed to have aroused.

The people bent their heads piously and murmured, *"Et cum spiritu tuo."*

The open door looked out upon the central *plaza,* where stood a large church of typical colonial design and construc-

tion, and with a single lateral bell tower. The building was set well up on a platform of shale, with broad shale steps, much broken and worn, leading up to it on all sides. José stepped out and mingled with the crowd, first regarding the old church curiously, and then looking vainly for the little girl, and sighing his disappointment when he did not see her.

In the *plaza* he was joined by Rosendo; and together they went to the house of the Alcalde. On the way the priest gazed about him with growing curiosity. To the north of the town stretched the lake, known to the residents only by the name of *La Cienaga*. It was a body of water of fair size, in a setting of exquisite tropical beauty. In a temperate climate, and a region more densely populated, this lake would have been priceless. Here in forgotten Guamocó it lay like an undiscovered gem, known only to those few inert and passive folk, who enjoyed it with an inadequate sense of its rare beauty and immeasurable worth. Several small and densely wooded isles rose from its unrippled bosom; and tropical birds of brilliant color hovered over it in the morning sun. Near one of its margins José distinguished countless white *garzas*, the graceful herons whose plumes yield the coveted aigrette of northern climes. They fed undisturbed, for this region sleeps unmolested, far from the beaten paths of tourist or vandal huntsman. To the west and south lay the hills of Guamocó, and the lofty *Cordilleras*, purpling in the light mist. Over the entire scene spread a damp warmth, like the atmosphere of a hot-house. By midday José knew that the heat would be insufferable.

The Alcalde, Don Mario Arvila, conducted his visitors through his shabby little store and into the *patio* in the rear, exclaiming repeatedly, "Ah, *Señor Padre*, we welcome you! All Simití welcomes you and kisses your hand!" In the shade of his arbor he sat down to examine José's letters from Cartagena.

Don Mario was a large, florid man, huge of girth, with brown skin, heavy jowls, puffed eyes, and bald head. As he read, his eyes snapped, and at times he paused and looked up curiously at the priest. Then, without comment, he folded the letters and put them into a pocket of his crash coat.

"*Bien*," he said politely, "we must have the Padre meet Don Felipe Alcozer as soon as he returns. Some repairs are needed on the church; a few of the roof tiles have slipped, and the rain enters. Perhaps, *Señor Padre*, you may say the Mass there next Sunday. We will see. A—a—you had illustrious ancestors, Padre," he added with hesitation.

"Do the letters mention my ancestry?" asked José with something of mingled surprise and pride.

"They speak of your family, which was, as we all know, quite renowned," replied the Alcalde courteously.

"Very," agreed José, wondering how much the Alcalde knew of his family.

"Don Ignacio was not unknown in this *pueblo*," affably continued the Alcalde.

At these words Rosendo started visibly and looked fixedly at the priest.

"The family name of Rincón," the Alcalde went on, "appears on the old records of Simití in many places, and it is said that Don Ignacio himself came here more than once. Perhaps you know, *Señor Padre*, that the Rincón family erected the church which stands in the *plaza?* And so it is quite appropriate that their son should officiate in it after all these centuries, is it not?"

No, José had not known it. He could not have imagined such a thing. He knew little of his family's history. Of their former vast wealth he had a vague notion. But here in this land of romance and tragedy he seemed to be running upon their reliques everywhere.

The conversation drifted to parish matters; and soon Rosendo urged their departure, as the sun was mounting high.

Seated at the table for the midday lunch, José again became lost in contemplation of the child before him. Her fair face flushed under his searching gaze; but she returned a smile of confidence and sweet innocence that held him spellbound. Her great brown eyes were of infinite depth. They expressed a something that he had never seen before in human eyes. What manner of soul lay behind them? What was it that through them looked out into this world of evil? Childish innocence and purity, yes; but vastly more. Was it—God Himself? José started at his own thought. Through his meditations he heard Rosendo's voice.

"Simití is very old, Padre. In the days of the Spaniards it was a large town, with many rich people. The Indians were all slaves then, and they worked in the mines up there," indicating the distant mountains. "Much gold was brought down here and shipped down the Magdalena, for the *caño* was wider in those days, and it was not so hard to reach the river. This is the end of the Guamocó trail, which was called in those days the *Camino Real.*"

"You say the mines were very rich?" interrogated José; not that the question expressed a more than casual interest, but rather to keep Rosendo talking while he studied the child.

But at this question Rosendo suddenly became less loquacious. José then felt that he was suspected of prying into matters which Rosendo did not wish to discuss with him, and so he pressed the topic no further.

"How many people did Don Mario say the parish contained?" he asked by way of diverting the conversation.

"About two hundred, Padre."

"And it has been vacant long?"

"Four years."

"Four years since Padre Diego was here," commented José casually.

It was an unfortunate remark. At the mention of the former priest's name Doña Maria hurriedly left the table. Rosendo's black face grew even darker, and took on a look of ineffable contempt. He did not reply. And the meal ended in silence.

It was now plain to José that Rosendo distrusted him. But it mattered little to the priest, beyond the fact that he had no wish to offend any one. What interest had he in boorish Simití, or Guamocó? The place was become his tomb—he had entered it to die. The child—the girl! Ah, yes, she had touched a strange chord within him; and for a time he had seemed to live again. But as the day waned, and pitiless heat and deadly silence brooded over the decayed town, his starving soul sank again into its former depression, and revived hope and interest died within him.

The implacable heat burned through the noon hour; the dusty streets were like the floor of a stone oven; the shale beds upon which the old town rested sent up fiery, quivering waves; the houses seethed; earth and sky were ablaze. How long could he endure it?

And the terrible *ennui,* the isolation, the utter lack of every trace of culture, of the varied interests that feed the educated, trained mind and minister to its comfort and growth—could he support it patiently while awaiting the end? Would he go mad before the final release came? He did not fear death; but he was horror-stricken at the thought of madness! Of losing that rational sense of the Ego which constituted his normal individuality!

Rosendo advised him to retire for the midday *siesta.* Through the seemingly interminable afternoon he lay upon his hard bed with his brain afire, while the events of his warped life moved before him in spectral review. The week which had passed since he left Cartagena seemed an age. When he might hope to receive word from the outside world, he could not imagine. His isolation was now complete. Even should letters succeed in reaching Simití for him, they must first pass through the hands of the Alcalde.

And what did the Alcalde know of him? And then, again, what did it matter? He must not lose sight of the fact that his

interest in the outside world—nay, his interest in all things—had ceased. This was the end. He had yielded, after years of struggle, to pride, fear, doubt. He had bowed before his morbid sense of honor—a perverted sense, he now admitted, but still one which bound him in fetters of steel. His life had been one of grossest inconsistency. He was utterly out of tune with the universe. His incessant clash with the world of people and events had sounded nothing but agonizing discord. And his confusion of thought had become such that, were he asked why he was in Simití, he could scarcely have told. At length he dropped into a feverish sleep.

The day drew to a close, and the flaming sun rested for a brief moment on the lofty tip of Tolima. José awoke, dripping with perspiration, his steaming blood rushing wildly through its throbbing channels. Blindly he rose from his rough bed and stumbled out of the stifling chamber. The living room was deserted. Who might be in the kitchen, he did not stop to see. Dazed by the garish light and fierce heat, he rushed from the house and over the burning shales toward the lake.

What he intended to do, he knew not. His weltering thought held but a single concept—water! The lake would cool his burning skin—he would wade out into it until it rose to his cracking lips—he would lie down in it, till it quenched the fire in his head—he would sleep in it—he would never leave it—it was cool—perhaps cold! What did the word mean? Was there aught in the world but fire—flames—fierce, withering, smothering, consuming heat? He thought the shales crackled as they melted beneath him! He thought his feet sank to the ankles in molten lava, and were so heavy he scarce could drag them! He thought the blazing sun shot out great tongues of flame, like the arms of a monster devilfish, which twined about him, transforming his blood to vapor and sucking it out through his gaping pores!

A blinding light flashed before him as he reached the margin of the lake. The universe burst into a ball of fire. He clasped his head in his hands—stumbled—and fell, face down, in the tepid waters.

CHAPTER 2

"IT was the little Carmen, Padre, who saw you run to the lake. She was sitting at the kitchen door, studying her writing lesson."

The priest essayed to rise from his bed. Night had fallen, and the feeble light of the candle cast heavy shadows over the

room, and made grotesque pictures of the black, anxious faces looking in at the grated window.

"But, Rosendo, it—was—a dream—a terrible dream!"

"*Na*, Padre, it was true, for I myself took you from the lake," replied Rosendo tenderly.

José struggled to a sitting posture, but would have fallen back again had not Rosendo's strong arm supported him. He passed his hand slowly across his forehead, as if to brush the mental cobwebs from his awakening brain. Then he inquired feebly:

"What does the doctor say?"

"Padre, there is no doctor in Simití," Rosendo answered quietly.

"No doctor!"

José kept silence for a few moments. Then—

"But perhaps I do not need one. What time did it occur?"

"It did not happen to-day, Padre," said Rosendo with pitying compassion. "It was nearly a week ago."

"Nearly a week! And have I lain here so long?"

"Yes, Padre."

The priest stared at him uncomprehendingly. Then—

"The dreams were frightful! I must have talked—raved! Rosendo—you heard me—?" His voice betrayed anxiety.

"There, Padre, think no more about it. You were wild—I fought to keep you in bed—we thought you must die—all but Carmen—but you have your senses now—and you must forget the past."

Forget the past! Then his wild delirium had laid bare his soul! And the man who had so faithfully nursed him through the crisis now possessed the sordid details of this wretched life!

José struggled to orient his undirected mind. A hot wave of anger swept over him at the thought that he was still living, that his battered soul had not torn itself from earth during his delirium and taken flight. Was he fated to live forever, to drag out an endless existence, with his heart written upon his sleeve for the world to read and turn to its own advantage? Rosendo had stood between him and death—but to what end? Had he not yet paid the score in full—good measure, pressed down and running over? His thoughts ran rapidly from one topic to another. Again they reverted to the little girl. He had dreamed of her in that week of black night. He wondered if he had also talked of her. He had lain at death's door—Rosendo had said so—but he had had no physician. Perhaps these simple folk brewed their own homely remedies—he wondered what they had employed in his case. Above the welter of his thoughts this question pressed for answer.

"What medicine did you give me, Rosendo?" he feebly queried.

"None, Padre."

José's voice rose querulously in a little excess of excitement. "What! You left me here without medical aid, to live or die, as might be?"

The gentle Rosendo laid a soothing hand upon the priest's feverish brow. "*Na*, Padre,"—there was a hurt tone in the soft answer—"we did all we could for you. We have neither doctors nor medicines. But we cared for you—and we prayed daily for your recovery. The little Carmen said our prayers would be answered—and, you see, they were."

Again the child!

"And what had she to do with my recovery?" José demanded fretfully.

"*Quien sabe?* It is sometimes that way when the little Carmen says people shall not die. And then," he added sadly, "sometimes they do die just the same. It is strange; we do not understand it." The gentle soul sighed its perplexity.

José looked up at him keenly. "Did the child say I should not die?" he asked softly, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, Padre; she says God's children do not die," returned Rosendo.

The priest's blood stopped in its mad surge and slowly began to chill. God's children do not die! What uncanny influence had he met with here in this crumbling, forgotten town? He sought the index of his memory for the sensations he had felt when he looked into the girl's eyes on his first morning in Simití. But memory reported back only impressions of goodness—beauty—love.

Then a dim light—only a feeble gleam—seemed to flash before him, but at a great distance. Something called him—not by name, but by again touching that unfamiliar chord which had vibrated in his soul when the child had first stood before him. He felt a strange psychic presentiment as of things soon to be revealed. A sentiment akin to awe stole over him, as if he were standing in the presence of a great mystery—a mystery so transcendental that the groveling minds of mortals have never apprehended it. He turned again to the man sitting beside his bed.

"Rosendo—where is she?"

"Asleep, Padre," pointing to the other bed. "But we must not wake her," he admonished quickly, as the priest again sought to rise; "we will talk of her to-morrow. I think—"

Rosendo stopped abruptly and looked at the priest as if he would fathom the inmost nature of the man. Then he continued uncertainly:

"I—I may have some things to say to you to-morrow—if you are well enough to hear them. But I will think about it to-night, and—if—*Bien!* I will think about it."

Rosendo rose slowly, as if weighted with heavy thoughts, and went out into the living room. Presently he returned with a rude, home-made broom and began to sweep a space on the dirt floor in the corner opposite José. This done, he spread out a light straw mat for his bed.

"The señora is preparing you a bowl of chicken broth and rice, Padre," he said. "The little Carmen saved a hen for you when you should awake. She has fed it all the week on rice and goat's milk. She said she knew you would wake up hungry."

José's eyes had closely followed Rosendo's movements, although he seemed not to hear his words. Suddenly he broke forth in protest.

"Rosendo," he cried, "have I your bed? And do you sleep there on the floor? I cannot permit this!"

"Say nothing, Padre," replied Rosendo, gently forcing José back again upon his bed. "My house is yours."

"But—the señora, your wife—where does she sleep?"

"She has her *petate* in the kitchen," was the quiet answer.

Only the two poor beds, which were occupied by the priest and the child! And Rosendo and his good wife had slept on the hard dirt floor for a week! José's eyes dimmed when he realized the extent of their unselfish hospitality. And would they continue to sleep thus on the ground, with nothing beneath them but a thin straw mat, as long as he might choose to remain with them? Aye, he knew that they would, uncomplainingly. For these are the children of the "valley of the pleasant 'yes.'"

José awoke the next morning with a song echoing in his ears. He had dreamed of singing; and as consciousness slowly returned, the dream-song became real. It floated in from the living room on a clear, sweet soprano. When a child he had heard such voices in the choir loft of the great Seville cathedral, and he had thought that angels were singing. As he lay now listening to it, memories of his childish dreams swept over him in great waves. The soft, sweet cadences rose and fell. His own heart swelled and pulsated with them, and his barren soul once more surged under the impulse of a deep, potential desire to manifest itself, its true self, unhampered at last by limitation and convention, unfettered by superstition, human creeds and false ambition. Then the inevitable reaction set in; a sickening sense of the futility of his longing settled over him, and he turned his face to the wall, while hot tears streamed over his sunken cheeks.

Again through his wearied brain echoed the familiar admonition, "Occupy till I come." Always the same invariable response to his strained yearnings. The sweet voice in the adjoining room floated in through the dusty palm door. It spread over his perturbed thought like oil on troubled waters. Perhaps it was the child singing. At this thought the sense of awe seemed to settle upon him again. A child—a babe—had said that he should live! If a doctor had said it he would have believed. But a child—absurd! It was a dream! But no; Rosendo had said it; and there was no reason to doubt him. But what had this child to do with it? Nothing! And yet—was that wholly true? Then whence his sensations when first he saw her? Whence that feeling of standing in the presence of a great mystery? "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—" Foolishness! To be sure, the child may have said he should not die; but if he were to live—which God forbid!—his own recuperative powers would restore him. Rosendo's lively imagination certainly had exaggerated the incident.

Exhausted by his mental efforts, and lulled by the low singing, the priest sank into fitful slumber. As he slept he dreamed. He was standing alone in a great desert. Darkness encompassed him, and a fearful loneliness froze his soul. About him lay bleaching bones. Neither trees nor vegetation broke the dull monotony of the cheerless scene. Nothing but waste, unutterably dreary waste, over which a chill wind tossed the tinkling sand in fitful gusts. In terror he cried aloud. The desert mocked his hollow cry. The darkness thickened. Again he called, his heart sinking with despair.

Then, over the desolate waste, through the heavy gloom, a voice seemed borne faint on the cold air, "Occupy till I come!" He sank to his knees. His straining eyes caught the feeble glint of a light, but at an immeasurable distance. Again he called; and again the same response, but nearer. A glow began to suffuse the blackness about him. Nearer, ever nearer drew the gleam. The darkness lifted. The rocks began to bud. Trees and vines sprang from the waste sand. As if in a tremendous explosion, a dazzling light burst full upon him, shattering the darkness, fusing the stones about him, and blinding his sight. A great presence stood before him. He struggled to his feet; and as he did so a loud voice cried, "Behold, I come *quickly!*"

"Señor Padre, you have been dreaming!"

The priest, sitting upright and clutching at the rough sides of his bed, stared with wooden obliviousness into the face of the little Carmen.

CHAPTER 3

"YOU are well now, aren't you, Padre?"

It was not so much an interrogation as an affirmation, an assumption of fact.

"Now you must come and see my garden—and Cucumbra, too. And Cantar-las-horas; have you heard him? I scolded him lots; and I know he wants to mind; but he just thinks he can't stop singing the Vespers—the old stupid!"

While the child prattled she drew a chair to the bedside and arranged the bowl of broth and the two wheat rolls she had brought.

"You are real hungry, and you are going to eat all of this and get strong again. Right away!" she added, emphatically expressing her confidence in the assumption.

José made no reply. He seemed again to be trying to sound the unfathomable depths of the child's brown eyes. Mechanically he took the spoon she handed him.

"See!" she exclaimed, while her eyes danced. "A silver spoon! Madre Ariza borrowed it from Doña Maria Alcozer. They have lots of silver. Now eat."

From his own great egoism, his years of heart-ache, sorrows, and shames, the priest's heavy thought slowly lifted and centered upon the child's beautiful face. The animated little figure before him radiated such abundant life that he himself caught the infection; and with it his sense of weakness passed like an illusion.

"And look, Padre! The broth—isn't it good?"

José tasted, and declared it delicious.

"Well, you know"—the enthusiastic little maid clambered up on the bed—"yesterday it was Mañuela—she was my hen. I told her a week ago that you would need her—"

"And you gave up your hen for me, little one?" he interrupted.

"Why—yes, Padre. It was all right. I told her how it was. And she clucked so hard, I knew she was glad to help the good *Cura*. And she was so happy about it! I told her she really wouldn't die. You know, things never do—do they?"

The priest hesitated. To hide his confusion and gain time he began to eat rapidly.

"No, they don't," said the girl confidently, answering her own question. "Because," she added, "God is *everywhere*—isn't He?"

What manner of answer could he, of all men, make to such

terribly direct questions as these! And it was well that Carmen evidently expected none—that in her great innocence she assumed for him the same beautiful faith which she herself held.

"Doña Jacinta didn't die last week. But they said she did; and so they took her to the cemetery and put her in a dark *bóveda*. And the black buzzards sat on the wall and watched them. Padre Rosendo said she had gone to the angels—that God took her. But, Padre, God doesn't make people sick, does He? They get sick because they don't know who He is. Every day I told God I knew He would cure you. And He did, didn't He?"

While the girl paused for breath, her eyes sparkled, and her face glowed with exaltation. Child-like, her active mind flew from one topic to another, with no thought of connecting links.

"This morning, Padre, two little green parrots flew across the lake and perched on our roof. And they sat there and watched Cucumbra eat his breakfast; and they tried to steal his fish; and they scolded so loud! Why did they want to steal from him, when there is so much to eat everywhere? But they didn't know any better, did they? I don't think parrots love each other very much, for they scold so hard. Padre, it is so dark in here; come out and see the sun and the lake and the mountains. And my garden—Padre, it is beautiful! Esteban said next time he went up the trail he would bring me a monkey for a pet; and I am going to name it Hombrecito. And Captain Julio is going to bring me a doll from down the river. But," with a merry, musical trill, "Juan said the night you came that *you* were my doll! Isn't he funny!" And throwing back her little head, the child laughed heartily.

"Padre, you must help padre Rosendo with his arithmetic. Every night he puts on his big spectacles and works so hard to understand it. He says he knows Satan made fractions. But, Padre, that isn't so, is it? Not if God made everything. Padre, you know *everything*, don't you? Padre Rosendo said you did. There are lots of things I want you to tell me—such lots of things that nobody here knows anything about. Padre," —the child leaned toward the priest and whispered low—"the people here don't know who God is; and you are going to teach them! There was a *Cura* here once, when I was a baby; but I guess he didn't know God, either."

She lapsed into silence, as if pondering this thought. Then, clapping her hands with unfeigned joy, she cried in a shrill little voice, "Oh, Padre, I am *so* glad you have come to Simiti! I just *knew* God would not forget us!"

José had no reply to make. His thought was busy with the phenomenon before him: a child of man, but one who, like Israel of old, saw God and heard His voice at every turn of her daily walk. Untutored in the ways of men, without trace of sophistication or cant, unblemished as she moved among the soiled vessels about her, shining with celestial radiance in this unknown, moldering town so far from the world's beaten paths.

The door opened softly and Rosendo entered, preceded by a cheery greeting.

"Hombre!" he exclaimed, surveying the priest, "but you mend fast! You have eaten all the broth! But I told the good wife that the little Carmen would be better than medicine for you, and that you must have her just as soon as you should awake."

José's eyes dilated with astonishment. Absorbed in the child, he had consumed almost his entire breakfast.

"He is well, padre Rosendo, he is well!" cried the girl, bounding up and down and dancing about the tall form of her foster-father. Then, darting to José, she seized his hand and cried, "Now to see my garden! And Cucumbra! And—!"

"Quiet, child!" commanded Rosendo, taking her by the arm. "The good *Cura* is ill, and must rest for several days yet."

"No, padre Rosendo, he is well—all well! Aren't you, Padre?" appealing to José, and again urging him forth.

The rapidity of the conversation and the animation of the beautiful child caused complete forgetfulness of self, and, together with the restorative effect of the wholesome food, acted upon the priest like a magical tonic. Weak though he was, he clung to her hand and, struggling out of the bed, stood uncertainly upon the floor. Instantly Rosendo's arm was about him.

"Don't try it, Padre," the latter urged anxiously. "The heat will be too much for you. Another day or two of rest will make you right."

But the priest, heedless of the admonition, suffered himself to be led by the child; and together they passed slowly out into the living room, through the kitchen, and thence into the diminutive rose garden, the pride of the little Carmen.

Doña Maria, wife of Rosendo, was bending over the primitive fireplace, busy with her matutinal duties, having just dusted the ashes from a corn *arepa* which she had prepared for her consort's simple luncheon. She was a woman well into the autumn of life; but her form possessed something of the elegance of the Spanish dames of the colonial period; her countenance bore an expression of benevolence, which ema-

nated from a gentle and affectionate heart; and her manner combined both dignity and suavity. She greeted the priest tenderly, and expressed mingled surprise and joy that he felt able to leave his bed so soon. But as her eyes caught Rosendo's meaning glance, and then turned to the child, they seemed to indicate a full comprehension of the situation.

The rose garden consisted of a few square feet of black earth, bordered by bits of shale, and seemingly scarce able to furnish nourishment for the three or four little bushes. But, though small, these were blooming in profusion.

"Padre Rosendo did this!" exclaimed the delighted girl. "Every night he brings water from *La Cienaga* for them!"

Rosendo smiled patronizingly upon the child; but José saw in the glance of his argus eyes a tenderness and depth of affection for her which bespoke nothing short of adoration.

Carmen bent over the roses, fondling and kissing them, and addressing them endearing names.

"She calls them God's kisses," whispered Rosendo to the priest.

At that moment a low growl was heard. José turned quickly and confronted a gaunt dog, a wild breed, with eyes fixed upon the priest and white fangs showing menacingly beneath a curling lip.

"Oh, Cucumbra!" cried the child, rushing to the beast and throwing her arms about its shaggy neck. "Haven't I told you to love everybody? And is that the way to show it? Now kiss the *Cura's* hand, for he loves you."

The brute sank at her feet. Then as she took the priest's hand and held it to the dog's mouth, he licked it with his rough tongue.

The priest's brain was now awhirl. He stood gazing at the child as if fascinated. Through his jumbled thought there ran an insistent strain, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The Father dwelleth in me and I in Him." He did not associate these words with the Nazarene now, but with the barefoot girl before him. Again within the farthest depths of his soul he heard the soft note of a vibrating chord—that chord which all the years of his unhappy life had hung mute, until here, in this moldering town, in the wilderness of forgotten Guamocó, the hand of Love had swept it.

The sun stood at the zenith. The day was white-hot. Doña Maria summoned her little family to the midday repast. Rosendo brought a chair for José and placed it near the rose garden in the shade of the house, for, despite all protest, the priest had stubbornly refused to return to his bed. Left now to himself, his thought hovered about the child, and then drifted

out across the incandescent shales to the beautiful lake beyond. The water lay like shimmering glass. In the distance the wooded slopes of the San Lucas mountains rose like green billows. Brooding silence spread over the scene. It was Nature's hour of *siesta*. In his own heart there was a great peace—and a strange expectancy. He seemed to be awaiting a revelation of things close at hand. In a way he felt that he had accomplished his purpose of coming to Simití to die, and that he was now awaiting the resurrection.

The peaceful revery was interrupted by Rosendo. "Padre, if you will not return to your bed—" He regarded the priest dubiously.

"No, Rosendo. I grow stronger every minute. But—where is Carmen?"

"She must help her mother."

A long pause ensued, while José impatiently waited for Rosendo to continue. The child was becoming his obsession. He was eager to talk of her, to learn her history, to see her, for her presence meant complete obliteration of self.

"Padre," Rosendo at length emerged from his meditation. "I would like to speak of the little Carmen."

"Yes," responded José with animation. Life and strength seemed to return to him with a bound.

"But—what say you? Shall we visit the church, which is only across the road? There we can talk without interruption. No one will be in the streets during the heat. And I will carry you over."

"Let us go to the church, yes; but I can walk. It is only a step."

José leaned upon Rosendo, the latter supporting him with his great arm, and together they crossed the road and mounted the shale platform on which stood the ancient edifice. Rosendo produced a huge key of antique pattern; and the rusty lock, after much resistance, yielded with a groan, and the heavy door creaked open, emitting an odor of dampness and must. Doffing their hats, the men entered the long, barn-like room. Rosendo carefully closed and locked the door behind them, a precaution necessary in a drowsing town of this nature, where the simple folk who see day after day pass without concern or event to break the deadening monotony, assemble in eager, buzzing multitudes at the slightest prospect of extraordinary interest.

The room was dimly lighted, and was open to the peak of the roof. From the rough-hewn rafters above hung hundreds of hideous bats. At the far end stood the altar. It was adorned with decrepit images, and held a large wooden statue

of the Virgin. This latter object was veiled with two flimsy curtains, which were designed to be raised and lowered with great pomp and the ringing of a little bell during service. The image was attired in real clothes, covered with tawdry finery, gilt paper, and faded ribbons. The head bore a wig of hair; and the face was painted, although great sections of the paint had fallen away, leaving the suggestion of pockmarks. Beneath this image was located the *sagrario*, the little cupboard in which the *hostia*, the sacred wafer, was wont to be kept exposed in the *custodia*, a cheap receptacle composed of two watch crystals. At either side of this stood half consumed wax tapers. A few rough benches were strewn about the floor; and dust and green mold lay thick over all.

At the far right-hand corner of the building a lean-to had been erected to serve as the *sacristía*, or vestry. In the worm-eaten wardrobe within hung a few vestments, adorned with cheap finery, and heavily laden with dust, over which scampered vermin of many varieties. An air of desolation and abandon hung over the whole church, and to José seemed to symbolize the decay of a sterile faith.

Rosendo carefully dusted off a bench near one of the windows and bade José be seated.

"*Padre*," he began, after some moments of deep reflection, "the little Carmen is not an ordinary child."

"I have seen that, Rosendo," interposed José.

"We—we do not understand her," Rosendo went on, carefully weighing his words; "and we sometimes think she is not—not altogether like us—that her coming was a miracle. But you do not believe in miracles," he added quizzically.

"Why do you say that, Rosendo?" José returned in surprise.

Rosendo paused before replying.

"You were very sick, Padre; and in the fever you—" the impeccably honest fellow hesitated.

"Yes, I thought so," said José with an air of weary resignation. "And what else did I say, Rosendo?"

The faultless courtesy of the artless Rosendo, a courtesy so genuine that José knew it came right from the heart, made conversation on this topic a matter of extreme difficulty to him.

"Do not be uneasy, Padre," he said reassuringly. "I alone heard you. Whenever you began to talk I would not let others listen; and I stayed with you every day and night. But—it is just because of what you said in the *calentura* that I am speaking to you now of the little Carmen."

Because of what he had said in his delirium! José's astonishment grew apace.

"Padre, many bad priests have been sent to Simití. It has been our curse. Priests who stirred up revolution elsewhere, who committed murder, and ruined the lives of fair women, have been put upon us. And when in Badillo I learned that you had been sent to our parish, I was filled with fear. I—I lost a daughter, Padre—"

The good man hesitated again. Then, as a look of stern resolution spread over his strong, dark face, he continued:

"It was Padre Diego! We drove him out of Simití four years ago. But my daughter, my only child, went with him." The great frame shook with emotion, while he hurried on disconnectedly.

"Padre, the priest Diego said that the little Carmen should become a Sister—a nun—that she must be sent to the convent in Mompox—that she belonged to the Church, and the Church would some day have her. But, by the Holy Virgin, the Church shall *not* have her! And I myself will slay her before this altar rather than let such as Padre Diego lay their slimy paws upon the angel child!"

Rosendo leaped to his feet and began to pace the floor with great strides. The marvelous frame of the man, in which beat a heart too big for the sordid passions of the flesh, trembled as he walked. José watched him in mute admiration, mingled with astonishment and a heightened sense of expectancy. Presently Rosendo returned and seated himself again beside the priest.

"Padre, I have lived in terror ever since Diego left Simití. For myself I do not fear, for if ever I meet with the wretch I shall wring his neck with my naked hands! But—for the little Carmen—*Dios!* they might steal her at any time! There are men here who would do it for a few *pesos!* And how could I prevent it? I pray daily to the Virgin to protect her. She—she is the light of my life. I watch over her hourly. I neglect my *hacienda,* that I may guard her—and I am a poor man, and cannot afford not to work."

The man buried his face in his huge hands and groaned aloud. José remained pityingly silent, knowing that Rosendo's heaving heart must empty itself.

"Padre," Rosendo at length raised his head. His features were drawn, but his eyes glowed fiercely. "Priests have committed dark deeds here, and this altar has dripped with blood. When a child, with my own eyes I saw a priest elevate the Host before this altar, as the people knelt in adoration. While their heads were bowed I saw him drive a knife into the neck of a man who was his enemy; and the blood spurted over the image of the Virgin and fell upon the Sacred Host itself! And what

did the wicked priest say in defense? Simply that he took this time to assassinate his man because then the victim could die adoring the Host and under the most favorable circumstances for salvation! *Hombre!* And did the priest pay the penalty for his crime? No! The Bishop of Cartagena transferred him to another parish, and told him to do better in future!"

José started in horror. But Rosendo did not stop.

"And I remember the story my father used to tell of the priest who poisoned a whole family in Simití with the communion wafer. Their estates had been willed to the Church, and he was impatient to have the management of them. Again nothing was done about it."

"But, Rosendo, if Simití has been so afflicted by bad priests, why are you confiding in me?" José asked in wonder.

"Because, Padre," Rosendo replied, "in the fever you said many things that made me think you were not a bad man. I did suspect you at first—but not after I heard you talk in your sleep. You, too, have suffered. And the Church has caused it. No, not God; but the men who say they know what He thinks and says. They make us all suffer. And after I heard you tell those things in your fever-sleep, I said to Maria that if you lived I knew you would help me protect the little Carmen. Then, too, you are a—" He lapsed abruptly into silence.

José pressed Rosendo's hand. "Tell me about her. You have said she is not your daughter. I ask only because of sincere affection for you all, and because the child has aroused in me an unwonted interest."

Rosendo looked steadily into the eyes of the priest for some moments. José as steadily returned the glance. From the eyes of the one there emanated a soul-searching scrutiny; from those of the other an answering bid for confidence. The bid was accepted.

"Padre," began Rosendo, "I place trust in you. Something makes me believe that you are not like other priests I have known. And I have seen that you already love the little Carmen. No, she is not my child. One day, about eight years ago, a steamer on its way down the river touched at Badillo to put off a young woman, who was so sick that the captain feared she would die on board. He knew nothing of her, except that she had embarked at Honda and was bound for Barranquilla. He hoped that by leaving her in the care of the good people of Badillo something might be done. The boat went its way; and the next morning the woman died, shortly after her babe was born. They buried her back of the village, and Escolastico's woman took the child. They tried to learn the history of the mother; but, though the captain of the boat made many in-

quiries, he could only find that she had come from Bogotá the day before the boat left Honda, and that she was then very sick. Some weeks afterward Escolastico happened to come to Simití, and told me the story. He complained that his family was already large, and that his woman found the care of the babe a burden. I love children, Padre, and it seemed to me that I could find a place for the little one, and I told him I would fetch her. And so a few days later I brought her to Simití. But before leaving Badillo I fixed a wooden cross over the mother's grave and wrote on it in pencil the name *'Dolores,'* for that was the name in the little gold locket which we found in her valise. There were some clothes, better than the average, and the locket. In the locket were two small pictures, one of a young man, with the name *'Guillermo'* written beneath it, and one of the woman, with *'Dolores'* under it. That was all. Captain Julio took the locket to Honda when he made inquiries there; but brought it back again, saying that nobody recognized the faces. I named the babe Carmen, and have brought her up as my own child. She—Padre, I adore her!"

José listened in breathless silence.

"But we sometimes think," said Rosendo, resuming his dramatic narrative, "that it was all a miracle, perhaps a dream; that it was the angels who left the babe on the river bank, for she herself is not of the earth."

"Tell me, Rosendo, just what you mean," said José reverently, laying his hand gently upon the older man's arm.

Rosendo shook his head slowly. "Talk with her, Padre, and you will see. I cannot explain. Only, she is not like us. She is like—"

His voice dropped to a whisper.

"—she is like—God. And she knows Him better than she knows me."

José's head slowly sank upon his breast. The gloom within the musty church was thick; and the bats stirred restlessly among the dusty rafters overhead. Outside, the relentless heat poured down upon the deserted streets.

"Padre," Rosendo resumed. "In the *calentura* you talked of wonderful things. You spoke of kings and popes and foreign lands, of beautiful cities and great marvels of which we know nothing. It was wonderful! And you recited beautiful poems—but often in other tongues than ours. Padre, you must be very learned. I listened, and was astonished, for we are so ignorant here in Simití, oh, so ignorant! We have no schools, and our poor little children grow up to be only *peones* and fishermen. But—the little Carmen—ah, she has a mind! Padre—"

Again he lapsed into silence, as if fearful to ask the boon.

"Yes, Rosendo, yes," José eagerly reassured him. "Go on."

Rosendo turned full upon the priest and spoke rapidly. "Padre, will you teach the little Carmen what you know? Will you make her a strong, learned woman, and fit her to do big things in the world—and then—then—"

"Yes, Rosendo?"

"—then get her away from Simití? She does not belong here, Padre. And—" his voice sank to a hoarse whisper—"will you help me keep her from the Church?"

José sat staring at the man with dilating eyes.

"Padre, she has her own Church. It is her heart."

He leaned over and laid a hand upon the priest's knee. His dark eyes seemed to burn like glowing coals. His whispered words were fraught with a meaning which José would some day learn.

"Padre, *that* must be left alone!"

A long silence fell upon the two men, the one massive of frame and black of face, but with a mind as simple as a child's and a heart as white as the snow that sprinkled his raven locks—the other a youth in years, but bowed with disappointment and suffering; yet now listening with hushed breath to the words that rolled with a mighty reverberation through the chambers of his soul:

"I am God, and there is none else! Behold, I come quickly! Arise, shine, for thy light is come!"

The sweet face of the child rose out of the gloom before the priest. The years rolled back like a curtain, and he saw himself at her tender age, a white, unformed soul, awaiting the sculptor's hand. God forbid that the hand which shaped his career should form the plastic mind of this girl!

Of a sudden a great thought flashed out of the depths of eternity and into his brain, a thought which seemed to illumine his whole past life. In the clear light thereof he seemed instantly to read meanings in numberless events which to that hour had remained hidden. His complex, misshapen career —could it have been a preparation?—and for this? He had yearned to serve his fellow-men, but had miserably failed. For, while to will was always present with him, even as with Paul, yet how to perform that which was good he found not. But now—what an opportunity opened before him! What a beautiful offering of self was here made possible? God, what a privilege!

Rosendo sat stolid, buried in thought. José reached out through the dim light and grasped his black hand. His eyes were lucent, his heart burned with the fire of an unknown enthusiasm, and speech stumbled across his lips.

"Rosendo, I came to Simití to die. And now I know that I *shall* die—to myself. But thereby shall I live. Yes, I shall live! And here before this altar, in the sight of that God whom she knows so well, I pledge my new-found life to Carmen. My mind, my thought, my strength, are henceforth hers. May her God direct me in their right use for His beautiful child!"

José and Rosendo rose from the bench with hands still clasped. In that hour the priest was born again.

CHAPTER 4

"HE that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The reporters of the unique Man of Galilee, upon whose straining ears these words fell, noted them for future generations of footsore pilgrims on life's wandering highway—for the rich, satiated with their gorgeous gluttonies; for the proud Levite, with his feet enmeshed in the lifeless letter of the Law; for the loathsome and outcast beggar at the gates of Dives. And for José de Rincón, priest of the Holy Catholic Church and vicar of Christ, scion of aristocracy and worldly learning, now humbled and blinded, like Paul on the road to Damascus, begging that his spiritual sight might be opened to the glory of the One with whom he had not known how to walk.

Returning in silence from the church to Rosendo's humble cottage, José had asked leave to retire. He would be alone with the great Presence which had come to him across the desert of his life, and now stood before him in the brightness of the undimmed sun. He no longer felt ill nor exhausted. Indeed, quite the contrary; a quickened sense of life, an eagerness to embrace the opportunity opening before him, caused his chest to heave and his shrunken veins to throb.

On his bed in the darkened room he lay in a deep silence, broken only at intervals by the hurried scampering of lizards darting through the interstices of the dry walls. His uncomprehending eyes were fixed upon the dust-laden thatch of the roof overhead, where droning wasps toiled upon their frail abodes. He lay with the portals of his mind opened wide. Through them, in ceaseless flow, passed two streams which did not mingle. The one, outward bound, turbid with its burden of egoism, fear, perplexity, and hopelessness, which, like barnacles, had fastened to his soul on its chartless voyage; the other, a stream of hope and confidence and definite purpose, a stream which leaped and sang in the warm sunlight of Love as it poured into his receptive brain.

The fresh thought which flowed into his mental chambers rapidly formed into orderly plans, all centering upon the child, Carmen. What could he teach her? The relative truths and worldly knowledge—purified, as far as in him lay, from the dross of speculation and human opinion—which lay stored in the archives of his mind? Yes; but that was all. History, and its interpretation of human progress; the languages; mathematics, and the elements of the physical sciences; literature; and a knowledge of people and places. With these his retentive mind was replete. But beyond this he must learn of her. And her tutor, he now knew, was the Master Mind, omniscient God. And he knew, more, that she possessed secrets whose potency he might as yet scarcely imagine. For, in an environment which for dearth of mental stimulus and incentive could scarcely be matched; amid poverty but slightly raised above actual want; untouched by the temperamental hopelessness which lies just beneath the surface of these dull, simple folk, this child lived a life of such ecstasy as might well excite the envy of the world's potentates.

But meantime, what should be his attitude toward the parish? He fully realized that he and the Church were now as far apart as the poles. Yet this was become his parish, the first he had ever held; and these were his people. And he must face them and preach—what? If not the Catholic faith, then would he be speedily removed. And that meant complete disruption of his rapidly formulating plans. But might he not in that event flee with Carmen, renounce the Church, and—

Impossible! Excommunication alone could sever the oath by which the Church held him. And for that he could not say that he was ready. For excommunication meant disgrace to his mother—perhaps the snapping of a heart already sorely strained. To renounce his oath was dishonor. To preach the Catholic faith without sincerity was scarcely less. Yet amid present circumstances this seemed the only course open to him.

But what must he teach Carmen in regard to the Church? Could he maintain his position in it, yet not of it; and at the same time rear her without its pale, yet so as not to conflict with the people of Simití, nor cause such comment as might reach the ears of the Bishop of Cartagena? God alone knew. It must be attempted, at any rate. There was no other way. And if it was God's plan, he might safely trust Him for the requisite strength and wisdom. For this course the isolation of Simití and the childish simplicity of its people afforded a tremendous advantage. On the other hand, he knew that both he and Carmen had powerful enemies. Yet, one with God might rout a host. And Carmen walked with God.

Thus throughout the afternoon the priest weighed and pondered the thoughts that sought admission to his reawakened mind. He was not interrupted until sundown; and then Carmen entered the room with a bowl of chocolate and some small wheaten loaves. Behind her, with an amusing show of dignity, stalked a large heron, an elegant bird, with long, scarlet legs, gray plumage, and a gracefully curved neck. When the bird reached the threshold it stopped, and without warning gave vent to a prolonged series of shrill, unmusical sounds. The startled priest sat up in his bed and exclaimed in amazement.

"It is only Cantar-las-horas, Padre," laughed the little maid. "He follows me wherever I go, unless he is off fishing. Sometimes when I go out in the boat with padre Rosendo he flies clear across the lake to meet us. He is lots older than I, and years ago, when there were *Curas* here, he learned his song. Whenever the *Angelus* rang he would try to sing just like it; and now he has the habit and can't help it. But he is such a dear, wise old fellow," twining a chubby arm lovingly about the bird's slender neck; "and he always sings just at six o'clock, the time the *Angelus* used to ring."

The heron manifested the deepest affection for the child as she gently stroked its plumage and caressed its long, pointed bill.

"But how do you suppose he knows when it is just six o'clock, *chiquita?*" asked José, deeply interested in the strange phenomenon.

"God tells him, Padre," was the direct and simple reply.

Assuredly, he should have known that! But he was fast learning of this unusual child, whose every movement was a demonstration of Immanuel.

"Does God tell you what to do, Carmen?" he asked, seeking to draw out the girl's strange thought, that he might probe deeper into her religious convictions.

"Why, yes, Padre." Her tone expressed surprise. "Doesn't He tell you, too?" Her great eyes searched him. He was a *Cura;* he should be very close to God.

"Yes, *chiquita*—that is, He has told me to-day what to do."

There was a shade of disappointment in her voice when she replied: "I guess you mean you listened to Him to-day, don't you, Padre? I think sometimes you don't want to hear Him. But," she finished with a little sigh, "there are lots of people here who don't; and that is why they are sick and unhappy."

José was learning another lesson, that of guarding his speech to this ingenuous girl. He discreetly changed the subject.

"What have you been doing this afternoon, little one?"

Her eyes instantly brightened, and the dark shade that had crossed her face disappeared.

"Well, after the *siesta* I helped madre Maria clean the yuccas for supper; and then I did my writing lesson. Padre Rosendo told me to-day that I could write better than he. But, Padre, will you teach madre Maria to read and write? And there are just lots of poor people here who can't, too. There is a school teacher in Simití, but he charges a whole *peso oro* a month for teaching; and the people haven't the money, and so they can't learn."

Always the child shifted his thought from herself to others. Again she showed him that the road to happiness wound among the needs of his fellow-men. The priest mentally recorded the instruction; and the girl continued:

"Padre Rosendo told madre Maria that you said you had come to Simití to die. You were not thinking of us then, were you, Padre? People who think only of themselves always want to die. That was why Don Luis died last year. He had lots of gold, and he always wanted more, and he was cruel and selfish, and he couldn't talk about anything but himself and how rich he was—and so he died. He didn't really die; but he thought about himself until he thought he died. And so they buried him. That's what always happens to people who think about themselves all the time—they get buried."

José was glad of the silence that fell upon them. Wrapped so long in his own egoism, he had now no worldly wisdom with which to match this girl's sapient words. He waited. He felt that Carmen was but the channel through which a great Voice was speaking.

"Padre," the tones were tender and soft, "you don't always think of good things, do you?"

"I? Why, no, little girl. I guess I haven't done so. That is, not always. But—"

"Because if you had you wouldn't have been driven into the lake that day. And you wouldn't be here now in Simití."

"But, child, even a *Cura* cannot always think of good things, when he sees so much wickedness in the world!"

"But, Padre, God is good, isn't He?"

"Yes, child." The necessity to answer could not be avoided.

"And He is everywhere?"

"Yes." He had to say it.

"Then where is the wickedness, Padre?"

"Why—but, *chiquita*, you don't understand; you are too young to reason about such things; and—"

In his heart José knew he spoke not the truth. He felt the

great brown eyes of the girl penetrate his naked soul; and he knew that in the dark recesses of the inner man they fell upon the grinning skeleton of hypocrisy. Carmen might be, doubtless was, incapable of reasoning. Of logical processes she knew nothing. But by what crass assumption might he, admittedly woefully defeated in his combat with Fate, oppose his feeble shafts of worldly logic to this child's instinct, an instinct of whose inerrancy her daily walk was a living demonstration? In quick penitence and humility he stretched out his arm and drew her unresisting to him.

"Dear little child of God," he murmured, as he bent over her and touched his lips to her rich brown curls, "I have tried my life long to learn what you already know. And at last I have been led to you—to you, little one, who shall be a lamp unto my feet. Dearest child, I want to know your God as you know Him. I want you to lead me to Him, for you know where He is."

"He is *everywhere*, Padre dear," whispered the child, as she nestled close to the priest and stole her soft arms gently about his neck. "But we don't see Him nor hear Him if we have bad thoughts, and if we don't love everybody and everything, even Cucumbra, and Cantar-las-horas, and—"

"Yes, *chiquita*, I know now," interrupted José. "I don't wonder they all love you."

"But, Padre dear, I love them—and I love you."

The priest strained her to him. His famished heart yearned for love. Love! first of the tender graces which adorned this beautiful child. Verily, only those imbued with it become the real teachers of men. The beloved disciple's last instruction to his dear children was the tender admonition to love one another. But why, oh, why are we bidden to love the fallen, sordid outcasts of this wicked world—the wretched, sinning pariahs—the greedy, grasping, self-centered mass of humanity that surges about us in such woeful confusion of good and evil? Because the wise Master did. Because he said that God was Love. Because he taught that he who loves not, knows not God. And because, oh, wonderful spiritual alchemy! because Love is the magical potion which, dropping like heavenly dew upon sinful humanity, dissolves the vice, the sorrow, the carnal passions, and transmutes the brutish mortal into the image and likeness of the perfect God.

Far into the night, while the child slept peacefully in the bed near him, José lay thinking of her and of the sharp turn which she had given to the direction of his life. Through the warm night air the hoarse croaking of distant frogs and the mournful note of the toucan floated to his ears. In the street

without he heard at intervals the pattering of bare feet in the hot, thick dust, as tardy fishermen returned from their labors. The hum of insects about his *toldo* lulled him with its low monotone. The call of a lonely jaguar drifted across the still lake from the brooding jungle beyond. A great peace lay over the ancient town; and when, in the early hours of morning, as the distorted moon hung low in the western sky, José awoke, the soft breathing of the child fell upon his ears like a benediction; and deep from his heart there welled a prayer—

"My God—*her* God—at last I thank Thee!"

CHAPTER 5

THE day following was filled to the brim with bustling activity. José plunged into his new life with an enthusiasm he had never known before. His first care was to relieve Rosendo and his good wife of the burden of housing him. Rosendo, protesting against the intimation that the priest could in any way inconvenience him, at last suggested that the house adjoining his own, a small, three-room cottage, was vacant, and might be had at a nominal rental. Some repairs were needed; the mud had fallen from the walls in several places; but he would plaster it up again and put it into habitable condition at once.

During the discussion Don Mario, the Alcalde, called to pay his respects to José. He had just returned from a week's visit to Ocaña, whither he had gone on matters of business with Simití's most eminent citizen, Don Felipe Alcozer, who was at present sojourning there for reasons of health. Learning of the priest's recent severe illness, Don Mario had hastened at once to pay his *devoirs*. And now the Holy Virgin be praised that he beheld the *Cura* again fully restored! Yes, the dismal little house in question belonged to him, but would the *Cura* graciously accept it, rent free, and with his most sincere compliments? José glanced at Rosendo and, reading a meaning in the slight shake of his head, replied that, although overwhelmed by the Alcalde's kindness, he could take the cottage only on the condition that it should become the parish house, which the Church must support. A shade of disappointment seemed to cross the heavy face of Don Mario, but he graciously acquiesced in the priest's suggestion; and arrangements were at once concluded whereby the house became the dwelling place of the new *Cura*.

Rosendo thereupon sent out a call for assistants, to which

the entire unemployed male population of the town responded. Mud for the walls was hastily brought from the lake, and mixed with manure and dried grass. A half dozen young men started for the islands to cut fresh thatch for the roof. Others set about scraping the hard dirt floors; while Don Mario gave orders which secured a table, several rough chairs, together with iron stewpans and a variety of enameled metal dishes, all of which Rosendo insisted should be charged against the parish. The village carpenter, with his rusty tools and rough, undressed lumber, constructed a bed in one of the rooms; and Juan, the boatman, laboriously sought out stones of the proper shape and size to support the cooking utensils in the primitive dirt hearth.

Often, as he watched the progress of these arrangements, José's thoughts reverted longingly to his father's comfortable house in far-off Seville; to his former simple quarters in Rome; and to the less pretentious, but still wholly sufficient *ménage* of Cartagena. Compared with this primitive dwelling and the simple husbandry which it would shelter, his former abodes and manner of life had been extravagantly luxurious. At times he felt a sudden sinking of heart as he reflected that perhaps he should never again know anything better than the lowly life of this dead town. But when his gaze rested upon the little Carmen, flying hither and yon with an ardent, anticipatory interest in every detail of the preparations, and when he realized that, though her feet seemed to rest in the squalid setting afforded by this dreary place, yet her thought dwelt ever in heaven, his heart welled again with a great thankfulness for the inestimable privilege of giving his new life, in whatever environment, to a soul so fair as hers.

While his house was being set in order under the direction of Rosendo, José visited the church with the Alcalde to formulate plans for its immediate repair and renovation. As he surveyed the ancient pile and reflected that it stood as a monument to the inflexible religious convictions of his own distant progenitors, the priest's sensibilities were profoundly stirred. How little he knew of that long line of illustrious ancestry which preceded him! He had been thrust from under the parental wing at the tender age of twelve; but he could not recall that even before that event his father had ever made more than casual mention of the family. Indeed, in the few months since arriving on ancestral soil José had gathered up more of the threads which bound him to the ancient house of Rincón than in all the years which preceded. Had he himself only been capable of the unquestioning acceptance of religious dogma which those old *Conqueros* and early forbears exhibited,

to what position of eminence in Holy Church might he not already have attained, with every avenue open to still greater preferment! How happy were his dear mother then! How glorious their honored name!—

With a sigh the priest roused himself and strove to thrust these disturbing thoughts from his mind by centering his attention upon the work in hand. Doña Maria came to him for permission to take the moldy vestments from the *sacristía* to her house to clean them. The Alcalde, bustling about, panting and perspiring, was distributing countless orders among his willing assistants. Carmen, who throughout the morning had been everywhere, bubbling with enthusiasm, now appeared at the church door. As she entered the musty, ill-smelling old building she hesitated on the threshold, her childish face screwed into an expression of disgust.

"Come in, little one; I need your inspiration," called José cheerily.

The child approached, and slipped her hand into his. "Padre Rosendo says this is God's house," she commented, looking up at José. "He says you are going to talk about God here—in this dirty, smelly old place! Why don't you talk about Him out of doors?"

José was becoming innured to the embarrassment which her direct questions occasioned. And he was learning not to dissemble in his replies.

"It is because the people want to come here, dear one; it is their custom."

Would the people believe that the wafer and wine could be changed into the flesh and blood of Jesus elsewhere—even in Nature's temple?

"But *I* don't want to come here!" she asseverated.

"That was a naughty thing to say to the good *Cura*, child!" interposed Don Mario, who had overheard the girl's remark. "You see, Padre, how we need a *Cura* here to save these children; otherwise the Church is going to lose them. They are running pretty wild, and especially this one. She is already dedicated to the Church; but she will have to learn to speak more reverently of holy things if she expects to become a good Sister."

The child looked uncomprehendingly from one to the other.

"Who dedicated her to the Church?" demanded José sharply.

"Oh, Padre Diego, at her baptism, when she was a baby," replied Don Mario in a matter of fact tone.

José shuddered at the thought of that unholy man's loathsome hands resting upon the innocent girl. But he made no

immediate reply. Of all things, he knew that the guarding of his own tongue was now most important. But his thought was busy with Rosendo's burning words of the preceding day, and with his own solemn vow. He reflected on his present paradoxical, hazardous position; on the tremendous problem which here confronted him; and on his desperate need of wisdom—yea, superhuman wisdom—to ward off from this child the net which he knew the subtlety and cruel cunning of shrewd, unscrupulous men would some day cause to be cast about her. A soul like hers, mirrored in a body so wondrous fair, must eventually draw the devil's most envenomed barbs.

To José's great relief Don Mario turned immediately from the present topic to one relating to the work of renovation. Finding a pretext for sending Carmen back to the house, the priest gave his attention unreservedly to the Alcalde. But his mind ceased not to revolve the implications in Don Mario's words relative to the girl; and when the midday *siesta* came upon him his brow was knotted and his eyes gazed vacantly at the manifestations of activity about him.

Hurrying across the road to escape the scalding heat, José's ears again caught the sound of singing, issuing evidently from Rosendo's house. It was very like the clear, sweet voice which had floated into his room the morning after he awoke from his delirium. He approached the door reverently and looked in. Carmen was arranging the few poor dishes upon the rough table, and as she worked, her soul flowed across her lips in song.

The man listened astonished. The words and the simple melody which carried them were evidently an improvisation. But the voice—did that issue from a human throat? Yes, for in distant Spain and far-off Rome, in great cathedrals and concert halls, he had sometimes listened entranced to voices like this—stronger, and delicately trained, but reared upon even less of primitive talent.

The girl caught sight of him; and the song died on the warm air.

The priest strode toward her and clasped her in his arms. "Carmen, child! Who taught you to sing like that?"

The girl smiled up in his face. "God, Padre."

Of course! He should have known. And in future he need never ask.

"And I suppose He tells you when to sing, too, as He does Cantar-las-horas?" said José, smiling in amusement.

"No, Padre," was the unaffected answer. "He just sings Himself in me."

The man felt rebuked for his light remark; and a lump rose

in his throat. He looked again into her fair face with a deep yearning.

Oh, ye of little faith! Did you but know—could you but realize—that the kingdom of heaven is within you, would not celestial melody flow from your lips, too?

Throughout the afternoon, while he labored with his willing helpers in the church building and his homely cottage, the child's song lingered in his brain, like the memory of a sweet perfume. His eyes followed her lithe, graceful form as she flitted about, and his mind was busy devising pretexts for keeping her near him. At times she would steal up close to him and put her little hand lovingly and confidingly into his own. Then as he looked down into her upturned face, wreathed with smiles of happiness, his breath would catch, and he would turn hurriedly away, that she might not see the tears which suffused his eyes.

When night crept down, unheralded, from the *Sierras*, the priest's house stood ready for its occupant. Cantar-las-horas had dedicated it by singing the *Angelus* at the front door, for the hour of six had overtaken him as he stood, with cocked head, peering curiously within. The dwelling, though pitifully bare, was nevertheless as clean as these humble folk with the primitive means at their command could render it. Instead of the customary hard *macana* palm strips for the bed, Rosendo had thoughtfully substituted a large piece of tough white canvas, fastened to a rectangular frame, which rested on posts well above the damp floor. On this lay a white sheet and a light blanket of red flannel. Rosendo had insisted that, for the present, José should take his meals with him. The priest's domestic arrangements, therefore, would be simple in the extreme; and Doña Maria quietly announced that these were in her charge. The church edifice would not be in order for some days yet, perhaps a week. But of this José was secretly glad, for he regarded with dread the necessity of discharging the priestly functions. And yet, upon that hinged his stay in Simití.

"Simití has two churches, you know, Padre," remarked Rosendo during the evening meal. "There is another old one near the eastern edge of town. If you wish, we can visit it while there is yet light."

José expressed his pleasure; and a few minutes later the two men, with Carmen dancing along happily beside them, were climbing the shaly eminence upon the summit of which stood the second church. On the way they passed the town cemetery.

"The Spanish cemetery never grows," commented José, stopping at the crumbling gateway and peering in. The place

of sepulture was the epitome of utter desolation. A tumbled brick wall surrounded it, and there were a few broken brick vaults, in some of which whitening bones were visible. In a far corner was a heap of human bones and bits of decayed coffins.

"Their rent fell due, Padre," said Rosendo with a little laugh, indicating the bones. "The Church rents this ground to the people—it is consecrated, you know. And if the payments are not made, why, the bones come up and are thrown over there."

"Humph!" grunted José. "Worse than heathenish!"

"But you see, Padre, the Church is only concerned with souls. And it is better to pay the money to get souls out of purgatory than to rent a bit of ground for the body, is it not?"

José wisely vouchsafed no answer.

"Come, Padre," continued Rosendo. "I would not want to have to spend the night here. For, you know, if a man spends a night in a cemetery an evil spirit settles upon him—is it not so?"

José still kept silence before the old man's inbred superstition. A few minutes later they stood before the old church. It was in the Spanish mission style, but smaller than the one in the central *plaza*.

"This was built in the time of your great-grandfather, Padre, the father of Don Ignacio," offered Rosendo. "The Rincón family had many powerful enemies throughout the country, and those in Simití even carried their ill feeling so far as to refuse to hear Mass in the church which your family built. So they erected this one. No one ever enters it now. Strange noises are sometimes heard inside, and the people are afraid to go in. You see there are no houses built near it. They say an angel of the devil lives here and thrashes around at times in terrible anger. There is a story that many years ago, when I was but a baby, the devil's angel came and entered this church one dark night, when there was a terrible storm and the waves of the lake were so strong that they tossed the crocodiles far up on the shore. And when the bad angel saw the candles burning on the altar before the sacred wafer he roared in anger and blew them out. But there was a beautiful painting of the Virgin on the wall, and when the lights went out she came down out of her picture and lighted the candles again. But the devil's angel blew them out once more. And then, they say, the Holy Virgin left the church in darkness and went out and locked the wicked angel in, where he has been ever since. That was to show her displeasure against the enemies of the great Rincóns for erecting this church. The *Cura* died suddenly that

night; and the church has never been used since The Virgin, you know, is the special guardian Saint of the Rincón family."

"But you do not believe the story, Rosendo?" José asked.

"*Quien sabe?*" was the noncommittal reply.

"Do you really think the Virgin could or would do such a thing, Rosendo?"

"Why not, Padre? She has the same power as God, has she not? The frame which held her picture"—reverting again to the story—"was found out in front of the church the next morning; but the picture itself was gone."

José glanced down at Carmen, who had been listening with a tense, rapt expression on her face. What impression did this strange story make upon her? She looked up at the priest with a little laugh.

"Let us go in, Padre," she said.

"No!" commanded Rosendo, seizing her hand.

"Are you afraid, Rosendo?" queried the amused José.

"I—I would—rather not," the old man replied hesitatingly. "The Virgin has sealed it." Physical danger was temperamental to this noble son of the jungle; yet the religious superstition which Spain had bequeathed to this oppressed land still shackled his limbs.

As they descended the hill Carmen seized an opportunity to speak to José alone. "Some day, Padre," she whispered, "you and I will open the door and let the bad angel out, won't we?"

José pressed her little hand. He knew that the door of his own mind had swung wide at her bidding in these few days, and many a bad angel had gone out forever.

CHAPTER 6

THE dawn of a new day broke white and glistering upon the ancient *pueblo*. From their hard beds of palm, and their straw mats on the dirt floors, the provincial dwellers in this abandoned treasure house of Old Spain rose already dressed to resume the monotonous routine of their lowly life. The duties which confronted them were few, scarce extending beyond the procurement of their simple food. And for all, excepting the two or three families which constituted the shabby aristocracy of Simití, this was limited in the extreme. Indian corn, *panela*, and coffee, with an occasional addition of *platanos* or rice, and now and then bits of *bagre*, the coarse fish yielded by the adjacent lake, constituted the staple diet of the

average citizen of this decayed hamlet. A few might purchase a bit of lard at rare intervals; and this they hoarded like precious jewels. Some occasionally had wheat flour; but the long, difficult transportation, and its rapid deterioration in that hot, moist climate, where swarms of voracious insects burrow into everything not cased in tin or iron, made its cost all but prohibitive. A few had goats and chickens. Some possessed pigs. And the latter even exceeded in value the black, naked babes that played in the hot dust of the streets with them.

José was up at dawn. Standing in the warm, unadulterated sunlight in his doorway he watched the village awaken. At a door across the *plaza* a woman appeared, smoking a cigar, with the lighted end in her mouth. José viewed with astonishment this curious custom which prevails in the *Tierra Caliente.* He had observed that in Simití nearly everybody of both sexes was addicted to the use of tobacco, and it was no uncommon sight to see children of tender age smoking heavy, black cigars with keen enjoyment. From another door issued two fishermen, who, seeing the priest, approached and asked his blessing on their day's work. Some moments later he heard a loud tattoo, and soon the Alcalde of the village appeared, marching pompously through the streets, preceded by his tall, black secretary, who was beating lustily upon a small drum. At each street intersection the little procession halted, while the Alcalde with great impressiveness sonorously read a proclamation just received from the central Government at Bogotá to the effect that thereafter no cattle might be killed in the country without the payment of a tax as therein set forth. Groups of *peones* gathered slowly about the few little stores in the main street, or entered and inspected for the thousandth time the shabby stocks. Matrons with black, shining faces cheerily greeted one another from their doorways. Everywhere prevailed a gentle decorum of speech and manners. For, however lowly the station, however pinched the environment, the dwellers in this ancient town were ever gentle, courteous and dignified. Their conversation dealt with the simple affairs of their quiet life. They knew nothing of the complex problems, social, economic, or religious, which harassed their brethren of the North. No dubious aspirations or ambitions stirred their breasts. Nothing of the frenzied greed and lust of material accumulation touched their child-like minds. They dwelt upon a plane far, far removed, in whatever direction, from the mental state of their educated and civilized brothers of the great States, who from time to time undertake to advise them how to live, while ruthlessly exploiting them for material gain. And thus they have been exploited ever since the heavy hand of the

Spaniard was laid upon them, four centuries ago. Thus they will continue to be, until that distant day when mankind shall have learned to find their own in another's good.

As his eyes swept his environment, the untutored folk, the old church, the dismally decrepit mud houses, with an air of desolation and utter abandon brooding over all; and as he reflected that his own complex nature, rather than any special malice of fortune, had brought this to him, José's heart began to sink under the sting of a condemning conscience. He turned back into his house. Its pitiful emptiness smote him sore. No books, no pictures, no furnishings, nothing that ministers to the comfort of a civilized and educated man! And yet, amid this barrenness he had resolved to live.

A song drifted to him through the pulsing heat of the morning air. It sifted through the mud walls of his poor dwelling, and poured into the open doorway, where it hovered, quivering, like the dust motes in the sunbeams. Instantly the man righted himself. It was Carmen, the child to whom his life now belonged. Resolutely he again set his wandering mind toward the great thing he would accomplish—the protection and training of this girl, even while, if might be, he found his life again in hers. Nothing on earth should shake him from that purpose! Doubt and uncertainty were powerless to dull the edge of his efforts. His bridges were burned behind him; and on the other side of the great gulf lay the dead self which he had abandoned forever.

A harsh medley of loud, angry growls, interspersed with shrill yelps, suddenly arose before his house, and José hastened to the door just in time to see Carmen rush into the street and fearlessly throw herself upon two fighting dogs.

"Cucumbra! Stop it instantly!" she exclaimed, dragging the angry brute from a thoroughly frightened puppy.

"Shame! shame! And after all I've talked to you about loving that puppy!"

The gaunt animal slunk down, with its tail between its legs.

"Did you ever gain anything at all by fighting? You know you never did! And right down in your heart you *know* you love that puppy. You've *got* to love him; you can't help it! And you might as well begin right now."

The beast whimpered at her little bare feet.

"Cucumbra, you let bad thoughts use you, didn't you? Yes, you did; and you're sorry for it now. Well, there's the puppy," pointing to the little dog, which stood hesitant some yards away. "Now go and play with him," she urged. "Play with him!" rousing the larger dog and pointing toward the puppy. "Play with him! You *know* you love him!"

Cucumbra hesitated, looking alternately at the small, resolute girl and the smaller dog. Her arm remained rigidly extended, and determination was written large in her set features. The puppy uttered a sharp bark, as if in forgiveness, and began to scamper playfully about. Cucumbra threw a final glance at the girl.

"Play with him!" she again commanded.

The large dog bounded after the puppy, and together they disappeared around the street corner.

The child turned and saw José, who had regarded the scene in mute astonishment.

"*Muy buenos dias, Señor Padre,*" dropping a little courtesy. "But isn't Cucumbra foolish to have bad thoughts?"

"Why, yes—he certainly is," replied José slowly, hard pressed by the unusual question.

"He has just *got* to love that puppy, or else he will never be happy, will he, Padre?"

Why would this girl persist in ending her statements with an interrogation! How could he know whether Cucumbra's happiness would be imperfect if he failed in love toward the puppy?

"Because, you know, Padre," the child continued, coming up to him and slipping her hand into his, "padre Rosendo once told me that God was Love; and after that I knew we just *had* to love everything and everybody, or else He can't see us—can He, Padre?"

He can't see us—if we don't love everything and everybody! Well! José wondered what sort of interpretation the Vatican, with its fiery hatred of heretics, would put upon this remark.

"Can He, Padre?" insisted the girl.

"Dear child, in these matters you are teaching me; not I you," replied the noncommittal priest.

"But, Padre, you are going to teach the people in the church," the girl ventured quizzically.

Ah, so he was! And he had wondered what. In his hour of need the answer was vouchsafed him.

"Yes, dearest child—and I am going to teach them what I learn from *you.*"

Carmen regarded him for a moment uncertainly. "But, padre Rosendo says you are to teach *me,*" she averred.

"And so I am, little one," the priest replied; "but not one half as much as I shall learn from you."

Doña Maria's summons to breakfast interrupted the conversation. Throughout the repast José felt himself subjected to the closest scrutiny by Carmen. What was running through her thought, he could only vaguely surmise. But he instinc-

tively felt that he was being weighed and appraised by this strange child, and that she was finding him wanting in her estimate of what manner of man a priest of God ought to be. And yet he knew that she embraced him in her great love. Oftentimes his quick glance at her would find her serious gaze bent upon him. But whenever their eyes met, her sweet face would instantly relax and glow with a smile of tenderest love—a love which, he felt, was somehow, in some way, destined to reconstruct his shattered life.

José's plans for educating the girl had gradually evolved into completion during the past two days. He explained them at length to Rosendo after the morning meal; and the latter, with dilating eyes, manifested his great joy by clasping the priest in his brawny arms.

"But remember, Rosendo," José said, "learning is not *knowing*. I can only teach her book-knowledge. But even now, an untutored child, she knows more that is real than I do."

"Ah, Padre, have I not told you many times that she is not like us? And now you know it!" exclaimed the emotional Rosendo, his eyes suffused with tears of joy as he beheld his cherished ideals and his longing of years at last at the point of realization. What he, too, had instinctively seen in the child was now to be summoned forth; and the vague, half-understood motive which had impelled him to take the abandoned babe from Badillo into the shelter of his own great heart would at length be revealed. The man's joy was ecstatic. With a final clasp of the priest's hand, he rushed from the house to plunge into the work in progress at the church.

José summoned Carmen into the quiet of his own dwelling. She came joyfully, bringing an ancient and obsolete arithmetic and a much tattered book, which José discovered to be a chronicle of the heroic deeds of the early *Conquistadores*.

"I'm through decimals!" she exclaimed with glistening eyes; "and I've read some of this, but I don't like it," making a little *moue* of disgust and holding aloft the battered history.

"Padre Rosendo told me to show it to you," she continued. "But it is all about murder, you know. And yet," with a little sigh, "he has nothing else to read, excepting old newspapers which the steamers sometimes leave at Bodega Central. And they are all about murder, and stealing, and bad things, too. Padre, why don't people write about good things?"

José gazed at her reverently, as of old the sculptor Phidias might have stood in awe before the vision which he saw in the unchiseled marble.

"Padre Rosendo helped me with the fractions," went on the girl, flitting lightly to another topic; "but I had to learn the

decimals myself. He couldn't understand them. And they are so easy, aren't they? I just love arithmetic!" hugging the old book to her little bosom.

Both volumes, printed in Madrid, were reliques of Spanish colonial days.

"Read to me, Carmen," said José, handing her the history.

The child took the book and began to read, with clear enunciation, the narrative of Quesada's sanguinary expedition to Bogotá, undertaken in the name of the gentle Christ. José wondered as he listened what interpretation this fresh young mind would put upon the motives of that renowned exploit. Suddenly she snapped the book shut.

"Tell me about Jesus," she demanded.

The precipitation with which the question had been propounded almost took his breath away. He raised his eyes to hers, and looked long and wonderingly into their infinite depths. And then the vastness of the problem enunciated by her demand loomed before him. What, after all, did he know about Jesus? Had he not arrived in Simití in a state of agnosticism regarding religion? Had he not come there enveloped in confusion, baffled, beaten, hopeless? And then, after his wonderful talk with Rosendo, had he not agreed with him that the child's thought must be kept free and open—that her own instinctive religious ideas must be allowed to develop normally, unhampered and unfettered by the external warp and bias of human speculation? It was part of his plan that all reference to matters theological should be omitted from Carmen's educational scheme. Yet here was that name on her lips—the first time he had ever heard it voiced by her. And it smote him like a hammer. He made haste to divert further inquiry.

"Not now, little one," he said hastily. "I want to hear you read more from your book."

"No," she replied firmly, laying the volume upon the table. "I don't like it; and I shouldn't think you would, either. Besides, it isn't true; it never really happened."

"Why, of course it is true, child! It is history, the story of how the brave Spaniards came into this country long ago. We will read a great deal more about them later."

"No," with a decisive shake of her brown head; "not if it is like this. It isn't true; I told padre Rosendo it wasn't."

"Well, what do you mean, child?" asked the uncomprehending priest.

"It is only a lot of bad thoughts printed in a book," she replied slowly. "And it isn't true, because God is *everywhere.*"

Clearly the man was encountering difficulties at the outset; and a part, at least, of his well-ordered curriculum stood in

grave danger of repudiation at the hands of this earnest little maid.

The girl stood looking at him wistfully. Then her sober little face melted in smiles. With childish impulsiveness she clambered into his lap, and twining her arms about his neck, impressed a kiss upon his cheek.

"I love you, Padre," she murmured; "and you love me, don't you?"

He pressed her to him, startled though he was. "God knows I do, little one!" he exclaimed.

"Of course He does," she eagerly agreed; "and He knows you don't want to teach me anything that isn't true, doesn't He, Padre dear?"

Yea, and more; for José was realizing now, what he had not seen before, that *it was beyond his power to teach her that which was not true.* The magnitude and sacredness of his task impressed him as never before. His puzzled brain grappled feebly with the enormous problem. She had rebuked him for trying to teach her things which, if he accepted the immanence of God as fact, her logic had shown him were utterly false. Clearly the grooves in which this child's pure thought ran were not his own. And if she would not think as he did, what recourse was there left him but to accept the alternative and think with her? For he would not, even if he could, force upon her his own thought-processes.

"Then, Carmen," he finally ventured, "you do not wish to learn about people and what they have done and are doing in the big world about you?"

"Oh, yes, Padre; tell me all about the good things they did!"

"But they did many wicked things too, *chiquita.* And the good and the bad are all mixed up together."

"No," she shook her head vigorously; "there isn't any bad. There is only good, for God is everywhere—isn't He?"

She raised up and looked squarely into the priest's eyes. Dissimulation, hypocrisy, quibble, cant—nothing but fearless truth could meet that gaze.

Suddenly a light broke in upon his clouded thought. This girl—this tender plant of God—why, she had shown it from the very beginning! And he, oh, blind that he was! he could not see nor accept it. The secret of her power, of her ecstasy of life—what was it but this?—*she knew no evil!*

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Oh, great God! It was the first—the very first—lesson

which Thou didst teach Thy child, Israel, as the curtain rose upon the drama of human life! And the awful warning has rung down through the corridors of time from the mouths of the prophets, whom we slew lest they wake us from our mesmeric sleep! Israel forgot Thy words; and the world has forgotten them, long, long since. Daily we mix our perfumed draft of good and evil, and sink under its lethal influence! Hourly we eat of the forbidden tree, till the pangs of death encompass us!

And when at last the dark angel hovered over the sin-stricken earth and claimed it for his own, the great Master came to sound again the warning—"As a man thinketh in his heart, *so is he!*" But they would have none of him, and nailed him to a tree!

Oh, Jerusalem! Oh, ye incarnate human mind! Even the unique Son of God wept as he looked with yearning upon you! Why? Because of your stubborn clinging to false ways, false beliefs, false thoughts of God and man! Because ye would not be healed; ye would not be made whole! Ye loved evil—ye gave it life and power, and ye rolled it like a sweet morsel beneath your tongue—and so ye died! So came death into this fair world, through the heart, the brain, the mind of man, *who sought to know what God could not!*

"Padre dear, you are so quiet." The girl nestled closer to the awed priest. Aye! And so the multitude on Sinai had stood in awed quiet as they listened to the voice of God.

This child knew no evil! The man could not grasp the infinite import of the marvelous fact. And yet he had sought to teach her falsities—to teach her that evil did exist, as real and as potent as good, and that it was to be accepted and honored by mankind! But she had turned her back upon the temptation.

"Padre, are you going to tell me about Jesus?"

The priest roused from his deep meditation.

"Yes, yes—I want to know nothing else! I will get my Bible, and we will read about him!"

"Bible? What is that, Padre dear?"

"What! You don't know what the Bible is?" cried the astonished priest.

"No, Padre."

"But have you never—has your padre Rosendo never told you that it is the book that tells—?"

"No," the girl shook her head. "But," her face kindling, "he told me that Jesus was God's only son. But we are all His children, aren't we?"

"Yes—especially you, little one! But Jesus was the greatest—"

"Did Jesus write the Bible, Padre?" the girl asked earnestly.

"No—we don't know who did. People used to think God wrote it; but I guess He didn't."

"Then we will not read it, Padre."

The man bent reverently over the little brown head and prayed again for guidance. What could he do with this child, who dwelt with Jehovah—who saw His reflection in every flower and hill and fleecy cloud—who heard His voice in the sough of the wind, and the ripple of the waters on the pebbly shore! And, oh, that some one had bent over him and prayed for guidance when he was a tender lad and his heart burned with yearning for truth!

"God wrote the arithmetic—I mean, He told people how to write it, didn't He, Padre?"

Surely the priest could acquiesce in this, for mathematics is purely metaphysical, and without guile.

"Yes, *chiquita.* And we will go right through this little book. Then, if I can, I will send for others that will teach you wonderful things about what we call mathematics."

The child smiled her approval. The priest had now found the only path which she would tread with him, and he continued with enthusiasm.

"And God taught people how to talk, little one; but they don't all talk as we do. There is a great land up north of us, which we call the United States, and there the people would not understand us, for we speak Spanish. I must teach you their language, *chiquita,* and I must teach you others, too, for you will not always live in Simití."

"I want to stay here always, Padre. I love Simití."

"No, Carmen; God has work for you out in His big world. You have something to tell His people some day, a message for them. But you and I have much work to do here first. And so we will begin with the arithmetic and English. Later we will study other languages, and we will talk them to each other until you speak them as fluently as your own. And meanwhile, I will tell you about the great countries of the world, and about the people that live in them. And we will study about the stars, and the rocks, and the animals; and we will read and work and read and work all day long, every day!" The priest's face was aglow with animation.

"But, Padre, when shall I have time to think?"

"Why, you will be thinking all the time, child!"

"No, you don't understand. I have to think about other things."

José looked at her with a puzzled expression. "What other things do you have to think about, *chiquita?*"

"About all the people here who are sick and unhappy, and who quarrel and don't love one another."

"Do you think about people when they are sick?" he asked with heightened curiosity.

"Yes, always!" she replied vigorously "When they are sick I go where nobody can find me and then just think that it isn't so."

"*Hombre!*" the priest ejaculated, his astonishment soaring Then—

"But when people are sick it *is* really so, isn't it, *chiquita?*"

"No!" emphatically. "It can't be—not if God is everywhere. Does He make them sick?" The child drove the heart-searching question straight into him.

"Why—no, I can't say that He does. And yet they somehow get sick."

"Because they think bad things, Padre. Because they don't think about God. They don't think He is here. And they don't care about Him—they don't love Him. And so they get sick," she explained succinctly.

José's mind reverted to what Rosendo had told him. When he lay tossing in delirium Carmen had said that he would not die. And yet that was perfectly logical, if she refused to admit the existence of evil.

"I thought lots about you last week, Padre."

The soft voice was close to his ear, and every breath swept over his heartstrings and made them vibrate.

"Every night when I went to sleep I told God I *knew* He would cure you."

The priest's head sank upon his breast.

Verily, I have not seen such faith, no, not in Israel! And the faith of this child had glorified her vision until she saw "the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

"Carmen"—the priest spoke reverently—"do the sick ones always get well when you think about them?"

There was not a shade of euphemism in the unhesitating reply—

"They are never really sick, Padre."

"But, by that you mean—"

"They only have bad thoughts."

"Sick thoughts, then?" he suggested by way of drawing out her full meaning.

"Yes, Padre—for God, you know, really *is* everywhere."

"Carmen!" cried the man. "What put such ideas into your little head? Who told you these things?"

Her brown eyes looked full into his own. "God, Padre dear."

God! Yes, of a verity she spoke truth. For nothing but her constant communion with Him could have filled her pure thought with a deeper, truer lore than man has ever quaffed at the world's great fountains of learning. He himself, trained by Holy Church, deeply versed in letters, science, and theology, grounded in all human learning, sat in humility at her feet, drinking in what his heart told him he had at length found—Truth.

He had one more question to ask. "Carmen, how do you know, how are you sure, that He told you?"

"Because it is true, Padre."

"But just how do you know that it is true?" he insisted.

"Why—it comes out that way; just like the answers to the problems in arithmetic. I used to try to see if by thinking only good thoughts to-day I would be better and happier to-morrow."

"Yes, and—?"

"Well, I always was, Padre. And so now I don't think anything but good thoughts."

"That is, you think only about God?"

"I always think about Him *first*, Padre."

He had no further need to question her proofs, for he knew she was taught by the Master himself.

"That will be all for this morning, Carmen," he said quietly, as he put her down. "Leave me now. I, too, have some thinking to do."

When Carmen left him, José lapsed into profound meditation. Musing over his life experiences, he at last summed them all up in the vain attempt to evolve an acceptable concept of God, an idea of Him that would satisfy. He had felt that in Christianity he had hold of something beneficent, something real; but he had never been able to formulate it, nor lift it above the shadows into the clear light of full comprehension. And the result of his futile efforts to this end had been agnosticism. His inability conscientiously to accept the mad reasoning of theologians and the impudent claims of Rome had been the stumbling block to his own and his family's dearest earthly hopes. He knew that popular Christianity was a disfigurement of truth. He knew that the theological claptrap which the Church, with such oracular assurance, such indubitable certainty and gross assumption of superhuman knowledge, handed out to a suffering world, was a travesty of the divinely simple teachings of Jesus, and that it had estranged mankind from their only visible source of salvation, the Bible. He saw more clearly than ever before that in the actual achievements of popular theology there had been ridiculously little that a seri-

ously-minded man could accept as supports to its claims to be a divinely revealed scheme of salvation. Yet there was no vital question on which certainty was so little demanded, and seemingly of so little consequence, as this, even though the joints of the theologians' armor flapped wide to the assaults of unprejudiced criticism.

But if the slate were swept clean—if current theological dogma were overthrown, and the stage set anew—what could be reared in their stead? Is it true that the Bible is based upon propositions which can be verified by all? The explorer in Cartagena had given José a new thought in Arnold's concept of God as "the Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." And it was not to be denied that, from first to last, the Bible is a call to righteousness.

But what is righteousness? Ethical conduct? Assuredly something vastly more profound, for even that "misses the mark." No, righteousness was right conduct until the marvelous Jesus appeared. But he swept it at once from the material into the mental; from the outward into the inward; and defined it as *right-thinking!*

"Righteousness!" murmured José, sitting with head buried in his hands. "Aye, the whole scheme of salvation is held in that one word! And the wreck of my life has been caused by my blind ignorance of its tremendous meaning! For righteousness is salvation. But Carmen, wise little soul, divined it instinctively; for, if there is one thing that is patent, it is that if a thing is evil it does not exist for her. Righteousness! Of course it means *thinking no evil!* Jesus lived his thorough understanding of it. And so does Carmen. And so would the world, but for the withering influence of priestly authority!"

At that moment Carmen reappeared to summon him to lunch.

"Come here, little girl," said José, drawing her to him. "You asked me to tell you about Jesus. He was the greatest and best man that ever lived. And it was because he never had a bad thought."

"Did he know that God was everywhere?" The little face turned lovingly up to his.

"He did, sweet child. And so do I—now; for I have found Him even in desolate Simití."

CHAPTER 7

CARMEN'S studies began in earnest that afternoon. In the quiet of his humble cottage José, now "a prisoner of the Lord," opened the door of his mental storehouse and carefully selected those first bits of knowledge for the foundation stones on which to rear for her, little by little, a broad education.

He found her a facile learner; her thorough ease in the rudiments of arithmetic and in the handling of her own language delighted him. His plan of tutelage, although the result of long contemplation, and involving many radical ideas regarding the training of children, ideas which had been slowly developing in his mind for years, he nevertheless felt in her case to be tentative. For he was dealing with no ordinary child; and so the usual methods of instruction were here wholly out of the question.

But on several points he was already firmly resolved. First, he would get well below the surface of this child's mind, and he would endeavor to train her to live in a depth of thought far, far beneath the froth and superficiality of the every-day thinking of mankind. Fortunately, she had had no previous bad training to be counteracted now. Nature had been her only tutor; and Rosendo's canny wisdom had kept out all human interference. Her associates in Simití were few. Her unusual and mature thought had set up an intellectual barrier between herself and the playmates she might have had. Fortunately, too, José had now to deal with a child who all her life had thought vigorously—and, he was forced to conclude, correctly. Habits of accurate observation and quick and correct interpretation would not be difficult to form in such a mind. Moreover, to this end he would aim to maintain her interest at the point of intensity in every subject undertaken; yet without forcing, and without sacrifice of the joys of childhood. He would be, not teacher only, but fellow-student. He would strive to learn with her to conceive the ideal without losing sight of the fact that it was a human world in which they dwelt. When she wished to play, he would play with her. But he would contrive and direct their amusements so as to carry instruction, to elucidate and exemplify it, to point morals, and steadily to contribute to her store of knowledge. His plan was ideal, he knew. But he could not know then that Nature—if we may thus call it—had anticipated him, and that the child, long since started upon the quest for truth, would quickly outstrip him

in the matter of conceiving the ideal and living in this world of relative fact with an eye single to the truth which shines so dimly through it.

José knew, as he studied Carmen and planned her training, that whatever instruction he offered her must be without taint of evil, so far as he might prevent. And yet, the thought of any attempt to withhold from her a knowledge of evil brought a sardonic smile to his lips. She had as yet everything to learn of the world about her. Could such learning be imparted to her free from error or hypothesis, and apart from the fiat of the speculative human mind? It must be; for he knew from experience that she would accept his teaching only as he presented every apparent fact, every object, every event, as a reflection in some degree of her immanent God, and subject to rigid demonstration. Where historical events externalized only the evil motives of the carnal mind, he must contrive to omit them entirely, or else present them as unreality, the result of "bad thoughts" and forgetfulness of God. In other words, only as he assumed to be the channel through which God spoke to her could he hope for success. To impart to her a knowledge of both good and evil was, at least at present, impossible. To force it upon her later would be criminal. Moreover, *why not try the audacious experiment of permitting and aiding this child to grow up without a knowledge of evil?*—that is, in her present conviction that only good is real, potent and permanent, while evil is impotent illusion and to be met and overcome on that basis. Would the resultant training make of her a tower of strength—or would it render her incapable of resisting the onslaughts of evil when at length she faced the world? His own heart sanctioned the plan; and—well, the final judgment should be left to Carmen herself.

The work proceeded joyously. At times Cucumbra interrupted by bounding in, as if impatient of the attention his little mistress was giving her tutor. Frequently the inquisitive Cantarlas-horas stalked through the room, displaying a most dignified and laudable interest in the proceedings. Late in the afternoon, when the sun was low, Rosendo appeared at the door. As he stood listening to José's narrative of men and places in the outside world, his eyes bulged. At length his untutored mind became strained to its elastic limit.

"Is that true, Padre?" he could not refrain from interrupting, when José had spoken of the fast trains of England. "Why, the Simití trail to Tachí is one hundred and fifty miles long; and it always took me six days to walk it. And do you say there are trains that travel that distance in as many hours?"

"There are trains, Rosendo, that traverse the distance in three hours."

"*Na*, Padre, it can't be done!" cried the incredulous Rosendo, shaking his head.

"Leave us, unbeliever!" laughed José, motioning him away. "I have more pliable material here to handle than you."

But Rosendo remained; and it was evident to the priest that he had come on an errand of importance. Moreover, the supper hour was at hand, and perhaps Doña Maria needed Carmen's help. So, dismissing the child, José turned to Rosendo.

"You were right," he began, as if taking up the thread of a broken discourse. "Carmen *was* left on the river bank by the angels."

"Then you do think it was a miracle!" said Rosendo in a voice of awe, as he sank into a chair.

The priest smiled. "Everything is a miracle, friend; for a miracle is simply a sign of God's presence. And finding Carmen in this musty, forgotten place is one of the greatest. For where she is, He is."

"Yes, Padre, that is true," assented Rosendo gravely.

"I was led here," continued José; "I see it now. Rosendo, all my life I have regarded evil as just as real and powerful as good. And my life has been one of bitterness and woe. Carmen sees only the good God everywhere. And she dwells in heaven. What is the logical inference? Simply that my mental attitude has been all wrong, my views erroneous, my thinking bad. I have tried to know both good and evil, to eat of the forbidden tree. And for so doing I was banished from paradise. Do you understand me?"

"Why—well, no, Padre—that is, I—" The honest fellow was becoming confused.

"Well, just this, then," explained the priest with animation. "I haven't gotten anywhere in life, and neither have you, because we have limited ourselves and crippled our efforts by yielding to fear, pride, ignorance, and the belief in evil as a real power opposed to good."

"I have often wondered myself, Padre, how there could be a devil if God is almighty. For in that case He would have had to make the devil, wouldn't He?"

"Just so!" cried José enthusiastically. "And as He *did* make everything, then either He made the devil, or else there isn't any."

"But that is pretty hard to see, Padre," replied the puzzled Rosendo. "Something makes us do wicked things."

"Simply the belief that there is a power apart from God."

"But doesn't that belief come from the devil?"

"Surely—the devil of imagination! Listen, Rosendo: Car-

men is daily putting into practice her instinctive knowledge of a mighty fact. She will reveal it all to us in due time. Let us patiently watch her, and try to see and understand and believe as she does. But in the meantime, let us guard our minds as we would a treasure house, and strive never to let a thought of evil get inside! My past life should serve as a perpetual warning."

Rosendo did not reply at once, but sat staring vacantly at the ground. José knew that his thoughts were with his wayward daughter. Then, as if suddenly remembering the object of his call, he took from his wallet two letters, which he handed to José with the comment: "Juan brought them up from Bodega Central this morning."

José took them with quickening pulse. One was from Spain, from his uncle. He devoured it eagerly. It was six weeks old when it arrived in Simití, and had been written before the news of his removal from Cartagena had reached Seville. His mother was well; and her hopes for her son's preferment were steadily reviving, after the cruel blow which his disgrace in Rome had given them. For his uncle's part, he hoped that José had now seen the futility of opposition to Holy Church, and that, yielding humbly to her gentle chastisement for the great injury he had inflicted upon her, he would now make amends and merit the favors which she was sure to bestow upon him in due season. To this end the uncle would bring to bear his own influence and that of His Eminence, the Archbishop of Seville. The letter closed with an invocation to the Saints and the ever-blessed Virgin.

José opened the second letter. It was nominally from the Bishop of Cartagena, although written, he well knew, by Wenceslas. His Reverence regretted that José had not come to him again before leaving Cartagena. He deplored exceedingly the necessity of assigning him to so lowly a parish; but it was discipline. His tenure of the parish would be a matter of probation. Assuming a penitent desire on the part of the priest to make reparation for past indiscretions, His Grace extended assurances of his support and tender consideration. And, regarding him still as a faithful son, he was setting forth herewith certain instructions which José would zealously carry out, to the glory of the sacred Mother Church and the blessed Virgin, and to his own edification, to wit: In the matter of the confessional he must be unremittingly zealous, not failing to put such questions to the people of Simití as would draw out their most secret thoughts. In the present crisis it was especially necessary to learn their political views. Likewise, he must not fail to impress upon them the sin of concealing wealth, and of

withholding contributions to the support of the glorious Mother. He, as priest of the parish, would be held personally responsible for the collection of an adequate "Peter's Pence," which must be sent to Cartagena at frequent intervals for subsequent shipment to Rome. For all contributions he was to allow liberal plenary indulgences. In the matter of inciting zeal for the salvation of those unfortunate souls lingering in the torments of purgatory, José must be unflagging. Each family in the parish should be constantly admonished and threatened, if necessary, to have Masses said for their deceased members; and he must forward the proceeds from such Masses at once to Cartagena. No less important, he must keep constantly before him the great fact that the hope of the blessed Mother lay in her young. To this end he must see that all children in his parish were in due time confirmed, and every effort made to have the females sent to the convent of Mompox. To encourage his parishioners, he might assure them of His Reverence's tender regard for them as his beloved children, and that he had certain special favors to grant to them in due time. Also, that a statue of the Virgin, which had arrived from Rome, and which carried the most potent blessing of the Holy Father, was to be bestowed upon that church in the diocese which within the next twelve months should contribute the largest amount of Peter's Pence in proportion to population. This plan should be especially attractive to the people of Simití, as the town lay on the confines of a district renowned in the ancient annals for its mineral wealth. Herein, too, lay a great opportunity for the priest; and His Reverence rejoiced in the certain knowledge that he would embrace it. Invoking the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Ever-Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, His Grace awaited with interest the priest's first report from the parish of Simití.

The letter fell like a wet blanket upon José, chilling him to the marrow, for it revived with cruel poignancy the fact that he was still a servant of Rome. In the past few happy days he had dwelt apart from the world in the consciousness of a new heaven and a new earth, revealed by Carmen. This sudden call to duty was like a summons from Mephistopheles to the fulfillment of a forgotten pact.

He carefully read the letter again. Beneath the specious kindliness of Wenceslas lay sinister motives, he knew. Among them, greed, of course. But—a darker thought—did Wenceslas know of Carmen's existence? Could Cartagena have received any intimation of his plans for her? Refusal to comply with these instructions meant—he dared not think what! On the other hand, strict compliance with them certainly was out of the question.

As for Peter's Pence, what could the impoverished folk of this decrepit town furnish! And yet, if a reasonable sum could only be contributed at frequent intervals, would not the vampire Wenceslas rest content, at least for a while? Oh, for a fortune of his own, that he might dump it all into the yawning maw of Holy Church, and thus gain a few years' respite for himself and Carmen!

"Bad news, Padre?" Rosendo inquired, anxiously regarding the priest's strained features.

What could the man do or say, limited, hounded, and without resources? Could he force these simple people to buy Masses? Could he take their money on a pretext which he felt to be utterly false? Yet Cartagena *must* be kept quiet at any hazard!

"Rosendo," he asked earnestly, "when you had a priest in Simití, did the people have Masses offered for their dead?"

"*Na*, Padre, we have little money for Masses," replied Rosendo sadly.

"But you have bought them?"

"At times—long ago—for my first wife, when she died without a priest, up in the Tiguí country. But not when Padre Diego was here. I couldn't see how Masses said by that drunken priest could please God, or make Him release souls from purgatory—and Padre Diego was drunk most of the time."

José became desperate. "Rosendo, we *must* send money to the Bishop in Cartagena. I *must* stay here—I *must!* And I can stay only by satisfying Wenceslas! If I can send him money he will think me too valuable to remove. It is not the Church, Rosendo, but Wenceslas who is persecuting me. It is he who has placed me here. He is using the Church for his own evil ends. It is he who must be placated. But I—I can't make these poor people buy Masses! And—but here, read his letter," thrusting it into Rosendo's hand.

Rosendo shook his head thoughtfully, and a cloud had gathered over his strong face when he returned the Bishop's letter to José.

"Padre, we will be hard pressed to support the church and you, without buying Masses. There are about two hundred people here, perhaps fifty families. But they are very, very poor. Only a few can afford to pay even a *peso oro* a month to the schoolmaster to have their children taught. They may be able to give twenty *pesos* a month to support you and the church. But hardly more."

It seemed to José that his soul must burst under its limitations.

"Rosendo, let us take Carmen and flee!" he cried wildly.

"How far would we get, Padre? Have you money?"

No, José had nothing. He lapsed into silence-shrouded despair.

The sun dropped below the wooded hills, and Cantar-las-horas had sung his weird vesper song. Dusk was thickening into night, though upon the distant *Sierras* a mellow glow still illumined the frosted peaks. Moments crept slowly through the enveloping silence.

Then the mental gloom parted, and through it arose the great soul of the black-faced man sitting beside the despairing priest.

"Padre"—Rosendo spoke slowly and with deep emotion. Tears trickled down his swart cheeks—"I am no longer young. More than sixty years of hardship and heavy toil rest upon me. My parents—I have not told you this—were slaves. They worked in the mines of Guamocó, under hard masters. They lived in bamboo huts, and slept on the damp ground. At four each morning, year after year, they were driven from their hard beds and sent out to toil under the lash fourteen hours a day, washing gold from the streams. The gold went to the building of Cartagena's walls, and to her Bishop, to buy idleness and luxury for him and his fat priests. When the war came it lasted thirteen years; but we drove the Christian Spaniards into the sea! Then my father and mother went back to Guamocó; and there I was born. When I was old enough to use a *batea* I, too, washed gold in the Tiguí, and in the little streams so numerous in that region. But they had been pretty well washed out under the Spaniards; and so my father came down here and made a little *hacienda* on the hills across the lake from Simití. Then he and my poor mother lay down and died, worn out with their long years of toil for their cruel masters."

He brushed the tears from his eyes; then resumed: "The district of Guamocó gradually became deserted. Revolution after revolution broke out in this unhappy country, sometimes stirred up by the priests, sometimes by political agitators who tried to get control of the Government. The men and boys went to the wars, and were killed off. Guamocó was again swallowed up by the forest—"

He stopped abruptly, and sat some moments silent.

"I have been back there many times since, and often I have washed gold again along the beautiful Tiguí," he continued. "But the awful loneliness of the jungle, and the memories of those gloomy days when I toiled there as a boy, and the thoughts of my poor parents' sufferings under the Spaniards, made me so sad that I could not stay. And then I got too old for that

kind of work, standing bent over in the cold mountain water all day long, swinging a *batea* heavy with gravel."

He paused again, and seemed to lose himself in the memory of those dark days.

"But there is still gold in the Tigui. I can find it. It means hard work—but I can do it. Padre, I will go back there and wash out gold for you to send to the Bishop of Cartagena, that you may stay here and protect and teach the little Carmen. Perhaps in time I can wash enough to get you both out of the country; but it will take many months, it may be, years."

O, you, whose path in life winds among pleasant places, where roses nod in the scented breeze and fountains play, picture to yourself, if you may, the self-immolation of this sweet-souled man, who, in the winter of life, the shadows of eternity fast gathering about him, bends his black shoulders again to the burden which Love would lay upon them. Aye, Love, into which all else merged—Love for the unknown babe, left helpless and alone on the great river's bank—Love for the radiant child, whose white soul the agents of carnal greed and lust would prostitute to their iniquitous system.

Night fell. By the light of their single candle the priest and Rosendo ate their simple fare in silence. Carmen was asleep, and the angels watched over her lowly bed.

The meal ended, Rosendo took up the candle, and José followed him into the bedroom. Reverently the two men approached the sleeping child and looked down upon her. The priest's hand again sought Rosendo's in a grasp which sealed anew the pact between them.

CHAPTER 8

LIKE the great Exemplar in the days of his preparation, José was early driven by the spirit into the wilderness, where temptation smote him sore. But his soul had been saved—"yet so as by fire." Slowly old beliefs and faiths crumbled into dust, while the new remained still unrevealed. The drift toward atheism which had set in during his long incarceration in the convent of Palazzola had not made him yield to the temptation to raise the mask of hypocrisy and plunge into the pleasures of the world, nor accept the specious proffer of ecclesiastical preferment in exchange for his honest convictions. Honor, however bigoted the sense, bound him to his oath, or at least to a compromising observance of it harmless to the Church. Pride contributed to hold him from the degradation

of a renegade and apostate priest. And both rested primarily on an unshaken basis of maternal affection, which fell little short of obsession, leaving him without the strength to say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

But, though atheism in belief leads almost inevitably to disintegration of morals, José had kept himself untainted. For his vital problems he had now, after many days, found "grace sufficient." In what he had regarded as the contemptible tricks of fate, he was beginning to discern the guiding hand of a wisdom greater than the world's. The danger threatened by Cartagena was, temporarily, at least, averted by Rosendo's magnificent spirit. Under the spur of that sacrifice his own courage rose mightily to second it.

Rosendo spent the day in preparation for his journey into the Guamocó country. He had discussed with José, long and earnestly, its probable effect upon the people of Simití, and especially upon Don Mario, the Alcalde; but it was decided that no further explanation should be made than that he was again going to prospect in the mineral districts already so familiar to him. As Rosendo had said, this venture, together with the unannounced and unsolicited presence of the priest in the town, could not but excite extreme curiosity and raise the most lively conjectures, which might, in time, reach Wenceslas. On the other hand, if success attended his efforts, it was more than probable that Cartagena would remain quiet, as long as her itching palm was brightened with the yellow metal which he hoped to wrest from the sands of Guamocó. "It is only a chance, Padre," Rosendo said dubiously. "In the days of the Spaniards the river sands of Guamocó produced from two to ten *reales* a day to each slave. But the rivers have been almost washed out."

José made a quick mental calculation. A Spanish *real* was equivalent to half a franc. Then ten *reales* would amount to five francs, the very best he could hope for as a day's yield.

"And my supplies and the support of the señora and Carmen must come out of that," Rosendo added. "Besides, I must pay Juan for working the *hacienda* across the lake for me while I am away."

Possibly ten *pesos oro,* or forty francs, might remain at the end of each month for them to send to Cartagena. José sighed heavily as he busied himself with the preparations.

"I got these supplies from Don Mario on credit, Padre," explained Rosendo. "I thought best to buy from him to prevent making him angry. I have coffee, *panela,* rice, beans, and tobacco for a month. He was very willing to let me have them—but do you know why? He wants me to go up there and fail.

Then he will have me in his debt, and I become his *peon*—and I would never be anything after that but his slave, for never again would he let me get out of debt to him."

José shuddered at the thought of the awful system of peonage prevalent in these Latin countries, an inhuman custom only a degree removed from the slavery of colonial times. This venture was, without doubt, a desperate risk. But it was for Carmen—and its expediency could not be questioned.

José penned a letter to the Bishop of Cartagena that morning, and sent it by Juan to Bodega Central to await the next down-river steamer. He did not know that Juan carried another letter for the Bishop, and addressed in the flowing hand of the Alcalde. José briefly acknowledged the Bishop's communication, and replied that he would labor unflaggingly to uplift his people and further their spiritual development. As to the Bishop's instructions, he would endeavor to make Simiti's contribution to the support of Holy Church, both material and spiritual, fully commensurate with the population. He did not touch on the other instructions, but closed with fervent assurances of his intention to serve his little flock with an undivided heart. Carmen received no lesson that day, and her rapidly flowing questions anent the unusual activity in the household were met with the single explanation that her padre Rosendo had found it necessary to go up to the Tiguí river, a journey which some day she might perhaps take with him.

During the afternoon José wrote two more letters, one to his uncle, briefly announcing his appointment to the parish of Simití, and his already lively interest in his new field; the other to his beloved mother, in which he only hinted at the newfound hope which served as his pillow at night. He did not mention Carmen, for fear that his letter might be opened ere it left Cartagena. But in tenderest expressions of affection, and regret that he had been the unwitting cause of his mother's sorrow, he begged her to believe that his life had received a stimulus which could not but result in great happiness for them both, for he was convinced that he had at last found his *métier*, even though among a lowly people and in a sequestered part of the world. He hoped again to be reunited to her—possibly she might some day meet him in Cartagena. And until then he would always hold her in tenderest love and the brightest and purest thought.

He brushed aside the tears as he folded this letter; and, lest regret and self-condemnation seize him again, hurried forth in search of Carmen, whose radiance always dispelled his gloom as the rushing dawn shatters the night.

She was not in Rosendo's house, and Doña Maria said she

had seen the child some time before going in the direction of the "shales." These were broad beds of rock to the south of town, much broken and deeply fissured, and so glaringly hot during most of the day as to be impassable. Thither José bent his steps, and at length came upon the girl sitting in the shade of a stunted *algarroba* tree some distance from the usual trail.

"Well, what are you doing here, little one?" he inquired in surprise.

The child looked up visibly embarrassed. "I was thinking, Padre," she made slow reply.

"But do you have to go away from home to think?" he queried.

"I wanted to be alone; and there was so much going on in the house that I came out here."

"And what have you been thinking about, Carmen?" pursued José, suspecting that her presence in the hot shale beds held some deeper significance than she had as yet revealed.

"I—I was just thinking that God is everywhere," she faltered.

"Yes, *chiquita.* And—?"

"That He is where padre Rosendo is going, and that He will take care of him up there, and bring him back to Simití again."

"And were you asking Him to do it, little one?"

"No, Padre; I was just *knowing* that He would."

The little lip quivered, and the brown eyes were wet with tears. But José could see that faith had conquered, whatever the struggle might have been. The child evidently had sought solitude, that she might most forcibly bring her trust in God to bear upon the little problem confronting her—that she might make the certainty of His immanence and goodness destroy in her thought every dark suggestion of fear or doubt.

"God will take care of him, won't He, Padre?"

José had taken her hand and was leading her back to the house.

"You have said it, child; and I believe you are a law unto yourself," was the priest's low, earnest reply. The child smiled up at him; and José knew he had spoken truth.

That evening, the preparations for departure completed, Rosendo and José took their chairs out before the house, where they sat late, each loath to separate lest some final word be left unsaid. The tepid evening melted into night, which died away in a deep silence that hung wraith-like over the old town. Myriad stars rained their shimmering lustre out of the unfathomable vault above.

"Un canasto de flores," mused Rosendo, looking off into the infinite blue.

"A basket of flowers, indeed," responded José reverently.

"Padre—" Rosendo's brain seemed to struggle with a tremendous thought—"I often try to think of what is beyond the stars; and I cannot. Where is the end?"

"There is none, Rosendo."

"But, if we could get out to the last star—what then?"

"Still no end, no limit," replied José.

"And they are very far away—how far, Padre?"

"You would not comprehend, even if I could tell you, Rosendo. But—how shall I say it? Some are millions of miles from us. Others so far that their light reaches us only after the lapse of centuries."

"Their light!" returned Rosendo quizzically.

"Yes. Light from those stars above us travels nearly two hundred thousand miles a second—"

"*Hombre!*" ejaculated the uncomprehending Rosendo.

"And yet, even at that awful rate of speed, it is probable that there are many stars whose light has not yet reached the earth since it became inhabited by men."

"*Caramba!*"

"You may well say so, friend."

"But, Padre—does the light never stop? When does it reach an end—a stopping-place?"

"There is no stopping-place, Rosendo. There is no solid sky above us. Go whichever way you will, you can never reach an end."

Rosendo's brow knotted with puzzled wonder. Even José's own mind staggered anew at its concept of the immeasurable depths of space.

"But, Padre, if we could go far enough up we would get to heaven, wouldn't we?" pursued Rosendo. "And if we went far enough down we would reach purgatory, and then hell, is it not so?"

Restraint fell upon the priest. He dared not answer lest he reveal his own paucity of ideas regarding these things. Happily the loquacious Rosendo continued without waiting for reply.

"Padre Simón used to say when I was a child that the red we saw in the sky at sunset was the reflection of the flames of hell; so I have always thought that hell was below us—perhaps in the center of the earth."

For a time his simple mind mused over this puerile idea. Then—

"What do you suppose God looks like, Padre?"

José's thought flew back to the galleries and chapels of Europe, where the masters have so often portrayed their ideas of God in the shape of an old, gray-haired man, partly bald,

and with long, flowing beard. Alas! how pitifully crude, how lamentably impotent such childish concepts. For they saw in God only their own frailties infinitely magnified. Small wonder that they lived and died in spiritual gloom!

"Padre," Rosendo went on, "if there is no limit to the universe, then it is—"

"Infinite in extent, Rosendo," finished José.

"Then whoever made it is infinite, too," Rosendo added hypothetically.

"An infinite effect implies an infinite cause—yes, certainly," José answered.

"So, if God made the universe, He is infinite, is He not, Padre?"

"Yes."

"Then He can't be at all like us," was the logical conclusion.

José was thinking hard. The universe stands as something created. And scientists agree that it is infinite in extent. Its creator therefore must be infinite in extent. And as the universe continues to exist, that which called it into being, and still maintains it, must likewise continue to exist. Hence, God *is*.

"Padre, what holds the stars in place?" Rosendo's questions were as persistent as a child's.

"They are held in place by laws, Rosendo," the priest replied evasively. But as he made answer he revolved in his own mind that the laws by which an infinite universe is created and maintained must themselves be infinite.

"And God made those laws?"

"Yes, Rosendo."

But, the priest mused, a power great enough to frame infinite laws must be itself all-powerful. And if it has ever been all-powerful, it could never cease to be so, for there could be nothing to deprive it of its power. Omnipotence excludes everything else. Or, what is the same thing, is all-inclusive.

But laws originate, even as among human beings, in mind, for a law is a mental thing. So the infinite laws which bind the stars together, and by which the universe was designed and is still maintained, could have originated only in a mind, and that one infinite.

"Then God surely must know everything," commented Rosendo, by way of simple and satisfying conclusion.

Certainly the creator of an infinite universe—a universe, moreover, which reveals intelligence and knowledge on the part of its cause—the originator of infinite laws, which reveal omnipotence in their maker—must have all knowledge, all wisdom, at his command. But, on the other hand, intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, are ever mental things. What could em-

brace these things, and by them create an infinite universe, but an infinite *mind?*

José's thought reverted to Cardinal Newman's reference to God as "an initial principle." Surely the history of the universe reveals the patent fact that, despite the mutations of time, despite growth, maturity, and decay, despite "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds," *something* endures. What is it—law? Yes, but more. Ideas? Still more. Mind? Yes, the mind which is the *anima mundi,* the principle, of all things.

"But if He is so great, Padre, and knows everything, I don't see why He made the devil," continued Rosendo; "for the devil fights against Him all the time."

Ah, simple-hearted child of nature! A mind so pure as yours should give no heed to thoughts of Satan. And the man at your side is now too deeply buried in the channels which run below the superficiality of the world's thought to hear your childish question. Wait. The cause of an infinite effect must itself be infinite. The framer of infinite laws must be an infinite mind. And an infinite mind must contain all knowledge, and have all power. But were it to contain any seeds or germs of decay, or any elements of discord—in a word, any evil—it must disintegrate. Then it would cease to be omnipotent. Verily, to be eternal and perfect *it must be wholly good!* "And so," the priest mused aloud, "we call it God."

But, he continued to reflect, when we accept the conclusion that the universe is the product of an infinite mind, we are driven to certain other inevitable conclusions, if we would be logical. The minds of men manifest themselves continually, and the manifestation is in mental processes and things. Mental activity results in the unfolding of ideas. Does the activity of an infinite mind differ in this respect? And, if not, can the universe be other than a mental thing? For, if an infinite mind created a universe, it must have done so *by the unfolding of its own ideas!* And, remaining infinite, filling all space, this mind must ever continue to contain those ideas. And the universe—the creation—is mental.

The burden of thought oppressed the priest, and he got up from his chair and paced back and forth before the house. But still his searching mind burrowed incessantly, as if it would unearth a living thing that had been buried since the beginning.

In order to fully express itself, an infinite mind would have to unfold an infinite number and variety of ideas. And this unfolding would go on forever, since an infinite number is never reached. This is "creation," and it could never terminate.

"Rosendo," said José, returning to his chair, "you have

asked what God looks like. I cannot say, for God must be mind, unlimited mind. He has all knowledge and wisdom, as well as all power. He is necessarily eternal—has always existed, and always will, for He is entirely perfect and harmonious, without the slightest trace or taint of discord or evil."

"Then you think He does not look like us?" queried the simple Rosendo.

"Mind does not look like a human body, Rosendo. And an infinite cause can be infinite only by being mind, not body. Moreover, He is unchanging—for He could not change and remain eternal. Carmen insists that He is everywhere. To be always present He must be what the Bible says He is, spirit. Or, what is the same thing, mind. Rosendo, He manifests Himself everywhere and in everything—there is no other conclusion admissible. And to be eternal He has got to be *absolutely good!*"

"But, Padre," persisted Rosendo, "who made the devil?"

"There is no devil!"

"But there is wickedness—"

"No!" interrupted José emphatically. "God is infinite good, and there can be no real evil."

"But how do you know that, Padre?"

"I can't say how I know it—it reasons out that way logically. I think I begin to see the light. Can you not see that for some reason Carmen doesn't admit the existence of evil? And you know, and I know, that she is on the right track. I have followed the opposite path all my life; and it led right into the slough of despond. Now I have turned, and am trying to follow her. And do you put the thought of Satan out of your mentality and do likewise."

"But, the Virgin Mary—she has power with God?" Rosendo's primitive ideas were in a hopeless tangle.

"Good friend, forget the Virgin Mary," said José gently, laying his hand on Rosendo's arm.

"Forget her! *Hombre!* Why—she has all power—she works miracles every hour—she directs the angels—gives commands to God himself! Padre Simón said she was the absolute mistress of heaven and earth, and that men and animals, the plants, the winds, all health, sickness, life and death, depended upon her will! He said she did not die as we must, but that she was taken up into heaven, and that her body was not allowed to decay and return to dust, as ours will. *Hombre!* She is in heaven now, praying for us. What would become of us but for her?—for she prays to God for us—she—!"

"No, Rosendo, she does nothing of the kind. God is infinite, unchanging. He could not be moved or influenced by

the Virgin Mary or any one else. He is unlimited *good*. He is not angry with us—He couldn't be, for He could not know anger. Did not Jesus say that God was Love? Love does not afflict—Love does not need to be importuned or prayed to. I see it now. I see something of what Carmen sees. We suffer when we sin, because we 'miss the mark.' But the punishment lasts only as long as the sin continues. And we suffer only until we know that God is infinite good, and that there is no evil. That is the truth, I feel sure, which Jesus came to teach, and which he said would make us free. Free from what? From the awful beliefs that use us, and to which we are now subject, until we learn the facts about God and His creation. Don't you see that infinite good could never create evil, nor ever permit evil to be created, nor allow it to really exist?"

"Well, then, what is evil? And where did it come from?"

"That we must wait to learn, Rosendo, little by little. You know, the Spanish proverb says, 'Step by step goes a great way.' But meantime, let us go forward, clinging to this great truth: God is infinite good—He is love—we are His dear children—and evil was *not* made by Him, and does not have His sanction. It therefore cannot be real. It must be illusion. And, being such, it can be overcome, as Jesus said it could."

"*Na,* Padre—"

"Wait, Rosendo!" José held up his hand. "Carmen is doing just what I am advising you to do—is she not?"

"Yes, Padre."

"Do you think she is mistaken?"

"Padre, she knows God better than she knows me," the man whispered.

"It was you who first told her that God was everywhere, was it not?"

"Yes, Padre."

And the mind of the child, keenly sensitive and receptive to truth, had eagerly grasped this dictum and made it the motif of her life. She knew nothing of Jesus, nothing of current theology. Divine Wisdom had used Rosendo, credulous and superstitious though he himself was, to guard this girl's mind against the entrance of errors which were taught him as a child, and which in manhood held him shackled in chains which he might not break.

"Rosendo," José spoke low and reverently, "I believe now that you and I have both been guided by that great mind which I am calling God. I believe we are being used for some beneficent purpose, and that it has to do with Carmen. That purpose will be unfolded to us as we bow to His will. Every way closed against me, excepting the one that led to Simití. Here I

found her. And now there seems to be but one way open to you—to go back to Guamocó. And you go, forgetful of self, thinking only that you serve her. Ah, friend, you are serving Him whom you reflect in love to His beautiful child."

"Yes, Padre."

"But, while we accept our tasks gratefully, I feel that we shall be tried—and we may not live to see the results of our labors. There are influences abroad which threaten danger to Carmen and to us. Perhaps we shall not avert them. But we have given ourselves to her, and through her to the great purpose with which I feel she is concerned."

Rosendo slowly rose, and his great height and magnificent physique cast the shadow of a Brobdignan in the light as he stood in the doorway.

"Padre," he replied, "I am an old man, and I have but few years left. But however many they be, they are hers. And had I a thousand, I would drag them all through the fires of hell for the child! I cannot follow you when you talk about God. My mind gets weary. But this I know, the One who brought me here and then went away will some day call for me —and I am always ready."

He turned into the house and sought his hard bed. The great soul knew not that he reflected the light of divine Love with a radiance unknown to many a boasting "vicar of Christ."

CHAPTER 9

AT the first faint flush of morn Rosendo departed for the hills. The emerald coronels of the giant *ceibas* on the far lake verge burned softly with a ruddy glow. From the water's dimpling surface downy vapors rose languidly in delicate tints and drew slowly out in nebulous bands across the dawn sky. The smiling softness of the velvety hills beckoned him, and the pungent odor of moist earth dilated his nostrils. He laughed aloud as the joyousness of youth surged again through his veins. The village still slumbered, and no one saw him as he smote his great chest and strode to the boat, where Juan had disposed his outfit and was waiting to pole him across. Only the faithful Doña Maria had softly called a final *"adioscito"* to him when he left his house. A half hour later, when the dugout poked its blunt nose into the ooze of the opposite shore, he leaped out and hurriedly divested himself of his clothing. Then he lifted his chair with its supplies to his shoulders, and Juan strapped it securely to his back, drawing

the heavy band tightly across his forehead. With a farewell wave of his hand to the lad, the man turned and plunged into the Guamocó trail, and was quickly lost in the dense thicket. Six days later, if no accident befell, he would reach his destination, the singing waters of the crystal Tiguí.

His heart leaped as he strode, though none knew better than he what hardships those six days held for him—days of plunging through fever-laden bogs; staggering in withering heat across open savannas; now scaling the slippery slopes of great mountains; now swimming the chill waters of rushing streams; making his bed where night overtook him, among the softly pattering forest denizens and the swarming insect life of the dripping woods. His black skin glistened with perspiration and the heavy dew wiped from the close-growing bush. With one hand he leaned upon a young sapling cut for a staff. With the other he incessantly swung his *machete* to clear the dim trail. His eyes were held fixed to the ground, to escape tripping over low vines, and to avoid contact with crawling creatures of the jungle, whose sting, inflicted without provocation, might so easily prove fatal. His active mind sported the while among the fresh thoughts stimulated by his journey, though back of all, as through a veil, the vision of Carmen rose like the pillar of cloud which guided the wandering Israel. Toil and danger fled its presence; and from it radiated a warm glow which suffused his soul with light.

When José arose that morning he was still puzzling over the logical conclusions drawn from his premise of the evening before, and trying to reconcile them with common sense and prevalent belief. In a way, he seemed to be an explorer, carving a path to hidden wonders. Doña Maria greeted him at the breakfast table with the simple announcement of Rosendo's early departure. No sign of sorrow ruffled her quiet and dignified demeanor. Nor did Carmen, who bounded into his arms, fresh as a new-blown rose, manifest the slightest indication of anxiety regarding Rosendo's welfare. José might not divine the thoughts which the woman's placid exterior concealed. But for the child, he well knew that her problem had been met and solved, and that she had laid it aside with a trust in immanent good which he did not believe all the worldly argument of pedant or philosopher could shake.

"Now to business once more!" cried José joyously, the meal finished. "Just a look-in at the church, to get the boys started; and then to devote the day to you, señorita!" The child laughed at the appellation.

Returning from the church some moments later, Jose found Carmen bending over the fireplace, struggling to remove a heavy kettle from the hot stones.

"Careful, child!" he cried in apprehension, hurrying to her assistance. "You will burn your fingers, or hurt yourself!"

"Not unless you make me, Padre," Carmen quickly replied, rising and confronting the priest with a demeanor whose every element spelled rebuke.

"Well, I certainly shall not *make* you!" the man exclaimed in surprise.

"No, Padre. God will not let you. He does not burn or hurt people."

"Certainly not! But—"

"And nothing else can, for He is everywhere—isn't He?"

"Well—perhaps so," the priest retorted impatiently. "But somehow people get burnt and hurt just the same, and it is well to be careful."

The child studied him for a moment. Then she said quietly—

"I guess people burn and hurt themselves because they are afraid—don't they? And I am not afraid."

She tossed her brown curls as if in defiance of the thought of fear. Yet José somehow felt that she never really defied evil, but rather met its suggestions with a firm conviction of its impotence in the presence of immanent good. He checked the impulse to further conversation. Bidding the child come to him as soon as possible to begin the day's work, he went back to his own abode to reflect.

He had previously said that this child should be brought up to know no evil. And yet, was he not suggesting evil to her at every turn? Did not his insistence upon the likelihood of hurting or burning herself emphasize his own stalwart belief in evil as an immanent power and contingency? Was he thus always to maintain a house divided against itself? But some day she *must* know, whether by instruction or dire experience, that evil is a fact to be reckoned with! And as her protector, it was his duty to— But he had not the heart to shatter such beautiful confidence!

Then he fell to wondering how long that pure faith could endure. Certainly not long if she were subjected to the sort of instruction which the children of this world receive. But was it not his duty with proper tutelage to make it last as long as possible? Was it not even now so firmly grounded that it never could be shaken?

He dwelt on the fact that nearly all children at some period early in life commune with their concept of God. He had, himself. As a very young child he had even felt himself on such terms of familiarity with God that he could not sleep without first bidding Him good night. As a young child, too,

he had known no evil. Nor do any children, until their perfect confidence in good is chilled by the false instruction of parents and teachers, who parade evil before them in all its hideous garb.

Alas! for the baneful belief that years bring wisdom. How pitiable, and how cruelly detrimental to the child are an ignorant parent's assumptions of superiority! How tremendous the responsibility that now lay at his own door! Yet no greater than that which lies at the door of every parent throughout the world.

It is sadly true, he reflected, that children are educated almost entirely along material lines. Even in the imparting of religious instruction, the spiritual is so tainted with materialism, and its concomitants of fear and limitation, that the preponderance of faith is always on the material side. José had believed that as he had grown older in years he had lost faith. Far from it! The quantity of his faith remained fixed; but the quality had changed, through education, from faith in good to faith in evil. And though trained as a priest of God, in reality he had been taught wholly to distrust spiritual power.

But how could a parent rely on spiritual power to save a child about to fall into the fire? Must not children be warned, and taught to protect themselves from accident and disaster, as far as may be? True—yet, what causes accident and disaster? Has the parent's thought aught to do with it? Has the world's thought? Can it be traced to the universal acceptance of evil as a power, real and operative? Does mankind's woeful lack of faith in good manifest itself in accident, sickness, and death?

A cry roused José from his revery. It came from back of the house. Hastening to the rear door he saw Doña Maria standing petrified, looking in wide-eyed horror toward the lake. José followed her gaze, and his blood froze. Carmen had been sent to meet the canoe that daily supplied fresh water to the village from the Juncal river, which flowed into the lake at the far north end. It had not yet arrived, and she had sat down beside her jar at the water's edge, and was lost in dreams as she looked out over the shimmering expanse. A huge crocodile which had been lying in the shadow of a shale ledge had marked the child, and was steadily creeping up behind her. The reptile was but a few feet from her when Doña Maria, wondering at her delay, had gone to the rear door and witnessed her peril.

In a flash José recalled the tale related to him but a few days before by Fidel Avila, who was working in the church.

"Padre," Fidel had said, "as soon as the church is ready I

shall offer a candle to good *Santa Catalina* for protecting my sister."

"How was that, my son?" inquired José.

"She protected her from a crocodile a year ago, Padre. The girl had gone to the lake to get water to wash our clothes, and as she sat in the stern of the boat dipping the water, a great crocodile rose and seized her arm. I heard her scream, and I was saying the rosary at the time. And so I prayed to *Santa Catalina* not to let the crocodile eat her, and she didn't."

"Then your sister was saved?"

"The crocodile pulled her under the water, Padre, and she was drowned. But he did not eat her; and we got her body and buried her here in the cemetery. We were very grateful."

Sancta simplicitas! That such childish credulity might be turned into proper channels!

But there were times when fish were scarce in the lake. Then the crocodiles became bold; and many babes had been seized and dragged off by them, never to return. The fishing this season had been very poor. And more than one fisherman had asked José to invoke the Virgin in his behalf.

Nearer crept the monster toward the unsuspecting girl. Suddenly she turned and looked squarely at it. She might almost have touched it with her hand. For José it was one of those crises that "crowd eternity into an hour." The child and the reptile might have been painted against that wondrous tropic background. The great brute stood bolt upright on its squat legs, its hideous jaws partly open. The girl made no motion, but seemed to hold it with her steady gaze. Then—the creature dropped; its jaws snapped shut; and it scampered into the water.

"God above!" cried José, as he rushed to the girl and clasped her in his arms. "Forgive me if I ever doubted the miracles of Jesus!"

Doña Maria turned and quietly resumed her work; but the man was completely unstrung.

"What is it, Padre?" Carmen asked in unfeigned surprise. "I am not afraid of crocodiles—are you? You couldn't be, if you knew that God is everywhere."

"But don't you know, child, that crocodiles have carried off—"

He checked himself. No—he would not say it. He had had his lesson.

"What, Padre?"

"Nothing—nothing—I forgot—that's all. A—a—come, let us begin our lessons now."

But his mind refused to be held to the work. Finally he had to ask—he could not help it.

"Carmen, what did you do? Did you talk to the crocodile?"

"Why, no, Padre—crocodiles don't talk!" And throwing her little head back she laughed heartily at the absurd idea.

"But—you did something! What was it? Tell me."

"No, Padre, I did nothing," the child persisted.

He saw he must reach her thought in another way. "Why did the crocodile come up to you, Carmen?" he asked.

"Why—I guess because it loved me—I don't know."

"And did you love it as you sat looking at it?"

"Of course, Padre. We have just got to love *everything.* Don't you know that?"

"Y—yes—that is so, *chiquita.* I—I just thought I would ask you. Now let us begin the arithmetic lesson."

The child loved the hideous saurian! And "perfect love casteth out fear." What turned the monster from the girl and drove it into the lake? Love, again, before which evil falls in sheer impotence? Had she worked a miracle? Certainly not! Had God interposed in her behalf? Again, no. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." And would divine Love always protect her? There could be no question about it, *as long as she knew no evil.*

The morning hours sped past. From arithmetic, they turned to the English lesson. Next to perfection in her own Castilian, José felt that this language was most important for her. And she delighted in it, although her odd little pronunciations, and her vain attempts to manipulate words to conform to her own ideas of enunciation brought many a hearty laugh, in which she joined with enthusiasm. The afternoon, as was his plan for future work, was devoted to narratives of men and events, and to descriptions of places. It was a ceaseless wonder to José how her mind absorbed his instruction.

"How readily you see these things, Carmen," he said, as he concluded the work for the day.

"See them, Padre? But not with my outside eyes."

The remark seemed to start a train of thought within her mentality. "Padre," she at length asked, "how do we see with our eyes?"

"It is very simple, *chiquita,*" José replied. "Here, let me draw a picture of an eye."

He quickly sketched a rough outline of the human organ of sight. "Now," he began, "you know you cannot see in the dark, don't you?"

"Yes, Padre?"

"In order to see, we must have light."

"What is light, Padre dear?"

"Well—light is—is vibrations. That is, rapid movement."

"What moves?"

"A—a—a—well, nothing—that is, light is just vibrations. The pendulum of the old clock in Don Mario's store vibrates, you know—moves back and forth."

"And light does that?"

"Yes; light *is* that. Now that chair there, for example, reflects light, just as a mirror does. It reflects vibrations. And these are all of just a certain length, for vibrations of just that length and moving up and down just so fast make light. The light enters the eye, like this," tracing the rays on his sketch. "It makes a little picture of the chair on the back of the eye, where the optic nerve is fastened. Now the light makes the little ends of this nerve vibrate, too—move very rapidly. And that movement is carried along the nerve to some place in the brain—to what we call the center of sight. And there we see the chair."

The child studied the sketch long and seriously.

"But, Padre, is the picture of the chair carried on the nerve to the brain?"

"Oh, no, *chiquita,* only vibrations. It is as if the nerve moved just a little distance, but very, very fast, back and forth, or up and down."

"And no picture is carried to the brain?"

"No, there is just a vibration in the brain."

"And that vibration makes us see the chair?"

"Yes, little one."

A moment of silence. Then—

"Padre dear, I don't believe it."

"Why, *chiquita!*"

"Well, Padre, what is it that sees the chair, anyway?"

"The mind, dear."

"Is the mind up there in the brain?"

"Well—no, we can't say that it is."

"Where is it, then?"

"A—a—well, no place in particular—that is, it is right here all the time."

"Well, then, when the mind wants to see the chair does it have to climb up into the brain and watch that little nerve wiggle?"

The man was at a loss for an answer. Carmen suddenly crumpled the sketch in her small hand and smiled up at him.

"Padre dear, I don't believe our outside eyes see anything. We just think they do, don't we?"

José looked out through the open door. Carmen's weird heron was stalking in immense dignity past the house.

"I think Cantar-las-horas is getting ready to sing the Vespers, *chiquita.* And so Doña Maria probably needs you now. We will talk more about the eye to-morrow."

By the light of his sputtering candle that night José sat with elbows propped on the table, his head clasped in his hands, and a sketch of the human eye before him. In his confident attempt to explain to Carmen the process of cognition he had been completely baffled. Certainly, light coming from an object enters the eye and casts a picture upon the retina. He had often seen the photographic camera exhibit the same phenomenon. The law of the impenetrability of matter had to be set aside, of course—or else light must be pure vibration, without a material vibrating concomitant. Then, too, it was plain that the light in some way communicated its vibration to the little projecting ends of the optic nerve, which lie spread out over the rear inner surface of the eye. And equally patent that this vibration is in some way taken up by the optic nerve and transmitted to the center of sight in the brain. But after that—what? He laughed again at Carmen's pertinent question about the mind climbing up into the brain to see the vibrating nerve. But was it so silly a presumption, after all? Is the mind within the brain, awaiting in Stygian darkness the advent of the vibrations which shall give it pictures of the outside world? Or is the mind outside of the brain, but still slavishly forced to look at these vibrations of the optic nerve and then translate them into terms of things without? What could a vibrating nerve suggest to a well-ordered mind, anyway? He might as logically wave a piece of meat and expect thereby to see a world! He laughed aloud at the thought. Why does not the foolish mind leave the brain and look at the picture on the retina? Or why does it not throw off its shackles and look directly at the object to be cognized, instead of submitting to dependence upon so frail a thing as fleshly eyes and nerves?

As he mused and sketched, unmindful of the voracious mosquitoes or the blundering moths that momentarily threatened his light, it dawned slowly upon him that the mind's awareness of material objects could not possibly depend upon the vibrations of pieces of nerve tissue, so minute as to be almost invisible to the unaided sight. Still more absurd did it appear to him that his own mind, of which he might justly boast tremendous powers, could be prostituted to such a degree that its knowledge of things must be served to it on waving pieces of flesh.

And how about the other senses—touch, hearing? Did the ear hear, or the hand feel? He had always accepted the

general belief that man is dependent absolutely upon the five physical senses for his knowledge of an outside world. And now a little thought showed that from these five senses man could not possibly receive anything more than a series of disconnected vibrations! And, going a step further, anything that the mind infers from these vibrations is unquestionably inferred *without a particle of outside authority!*

He rose and paced the floor. A tremendous idea seemed to be knocking at the portal of his mentality.

What can the mind know? Assuredly nothing but the contents of itself. But the contents of mind are thoughts, ideas, mental things. Do solid material objects enter the mind? Certainly not! Then the mind knows not things, but *its thoughts of things.* And instead of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling solid material objects, the mind sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels—what? The contents of itself! Its own thoughts and ideas! And the outer world? Is only what the mind *believes* it to be. But surely his mind saw an outer world through the medium of his eye! No. His mind saw only its own concepts of an outer world—and these concepts, being mental, might take on whatever hue and tinge his mind decreed. In other words, instead of seeing a world of matter, he was seeing only a mental picture of a world. And that picture was in his own mind, *and formed by that mind!*

The man seized his hat and hurried out into the night. He walked rapidly the full length of the town. His mind was wrestling with stupendous thoughts.

An hour later he returned to his house, and seizing a pencil, wrote rapidly: Matter is mental. We do not see or feel matter, but we *think* it. It is formed and held as a mental concept in every human mind. The material universe is but the human mind's concept of a universe, and can only be this mentality's translation to itself of infinite Mind's purely mental Creation.

"And so," he commented aloud, sitting back and regarding his writing, "all my miserable life I have been seeing only my own thoughts! And I have let them use me and color my whole outlook!"

He extinguished the candle and threw himself, fully dressed, upon his bed.

CHAPTER 10

MOMENTOUS changes, of far-reaching effect, had come swiftly upon José de Rincón during the last few days, changes which were destined after much vacillation and great mental struggle to leave a reversed outlook. But let no one think these changes fortuitous or casual, the chance result of a new throw of Fate's dice. José, seeing them dimly outlined, did not so regard them, but rather looked upon them as the working of great mental laws, still unknown, whose cumulative effect had begun a transformation in his soul. How often in his seminary days he had pondered the scripture, "He left not Himself without witness." How often he had tried to see the hopeless confusion of good and evil in the world about him as a witness to the One who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. And he had at last abandoned his efforts in despair. Yet that there must be something behind the complex phenomena which men call life, he knew. Call it what he would —law, force, mind, God, or even X, the great unknown quantity for which life's intricate equations must be solved—yet *something* there was in it all which endured in an eternal manifestation. But could that something endure in an expression both good and evil?

He had long since abandoned all study of the Bible. But in these last days there had begun to dawn upon him the conviction that within that strange book were locked mysteries which far transcended the wildest imaginings of the human mind. With it came also the certainty that Jesus had been in complete possession of those sacred mysteries. There could be no question now that his mission had been woefully misunderstood, often deliberately misinterpreted, and too frequently maliciously misused by mankind. His greatest sayings, teachings so pregnant with truth that, had they been rightfully appropriated by men, ere this would have dematerialized the universe and revealed the spiritual kingdom of God, had been warped by cunning minds into crude systems of theology and righteous shams, behind which the world's money-changers and sellers of doves still drove their wicked traffic and offered insults to Truth in the temple of the Most High.

Oh, how he now lamented the narrowness and the intellectual limitations with which his seminary training had been hedged about! The world's thought had been a closed book to him. Because of his morbid honesty, only such pages reached his eye as had passed the bigoted censorship of Holy

Church. His religious instruction had been served to him with the seal of infallible authority. Of other systems of theology he had been permitted only the Vatican's biased interpretation, for the curse of Holy Church rested upon them. Of current philosophical thought, of Bible criticism and the results of independent scriptural research, he knew practically nothing—little beyond what the explorer had told him in their memorable talks a few weeks before in Cartagena. But, had he known it, these had unbarred the portals of his mind to the reception of the new ideas which, under a most powerful stimulus, were now flowing so steadily through them. That stimulus was Carmen.

To meet with a child of tender years who knows no evil is, after all, a not uncommon thing. For, did we but realize it, the world abounds in them. They are its glory, its radiance —until they are taught to heed the hiss of the serpent. Their pure knowledge of immanent good would endure—ah, who may say how long?—did not we who measure our wisdom by years forbid them with the fear-born mandate: "Thus far!" What manner of being was he who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not?" Oh, ye parents, who forbid your little ones to come to the Christ by hourly heaping up before them the limitations of fear and doubt, of faith in the power and reality of sin and evil, of false instruction, and withering material beliefs! Would not the Christ pray for you to-day, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?

When José met Carmen she was holding steadfastly to her vision—the immanence and allness of God. Each day she created the morrow; and she knew to a certainty that it would be happy. Would he, clanking his fetters of worldly beliefs, be the one to shatter her illusion, if illusion it be? Nay, rather should he seek to learn of her, if haply she be in possession of that jewel for which he had searched a vain lifetime. Already from the stimulus which his intercourse with the child had given his mental processes there had come a sudden liberation of thought. Into his freer mentality the Christ-idea now flowed.

Mankind complain that they cannot "prove" God. But Paul long since declared emphatically that to prove Him the human mind must be transformed. In the light of the great ideas which had dawned upon him in the past few days—the nature of God as mind, unlimited, immanent, eternal, and good; and the specious character of the five physical senses, which from the beginning have deluded mankind into the false belief that through them comes a true knowledge of the cosmos—José's mentality was being formed anew.

Hegel, delving for truth in a world of illusion, summed up a lifetime of patient research in the pregnant statement, "The true knowledge of God begins when we know that things as they are have no truth in them." The testimony of the five physical senses constitutes "things as they are." But—if José's reasoning be not illogical—the human mind receives no testimony from these senses, which, at most, can offer but insensate and meaningless vibrations in a pulpy mass called the brain. The true knowledge of God, for which José had yearned and striven, begins only when men turn from the mesmeric deception of the physical senses, and learn that there is something, knowable and usable, behind them, and of whose existence they give not the slightest intimation.

It was Saturday. The church edifice was so far put in order that José found no reason for not holding service on the morrow. He therefore announced the fact, and told Carmen that he must devote the day to preparation. Their lessons must go over to Monday. Seeking the solitude of his house, José returned to his Bible.

He began with Genesis. "In the beginning—God." Not, as in the codes of men, God last, and after every material expedient has been exhausted—but "to begin with." José could not deny that for all that exists there is a cause. Nor can the human mind object to the implication that the cause of an existing universe must itself continue to exist. Even less can it deny that the framer of the worlds, bound together in infinite space by the unbreakable cables of infinite laws, must be omnipotent. And to retain its omnipotence, that cause must be perfect—absolutely good—every whit pure, sound, and harmonious; for evil is demonstrably self-destructive. And, lastly, what power could operate thus but an infinite intelligence, an all-inclusive mind?

Now let the human mentality continue its own reasoning, if so be that it hold fast to fact and employ logical processes. If "like produces like"—and from thistles figs do not grow—that which mind creates must be mental. And a good cause can produce only a good effect. So the ancient writer, "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." The inspired scribe—inspired? Yes, mused José, for inspiration is but the flow of truth into one's mentality—stopped not until he had said, "So God created man in His own image"—

Wait! He will drive that home.

—"in the image of God"—not in the image of matter, not in the likeness of evil—"created He him." But what had now become of that man?

So Jesus, centuries later, "God is spirit," and, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Or, man—true man—expresses mind, God, and is His eternal and spiritual likeness and reflection. But, to make this still clearer to torpid minds, Paul wrote, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Then he added, "To be spiritually minded is life." As if he would say, True life is the *consciousness* of spiritual things only.

Is human life aught but a series of states of consciousness? And is consciousness aught but mental activity?—for when the mind's activity ceases, the man dies. But mental activity is the activity of thought.

"It is the activity of thought," said José aloud, "that makes us believe that fleshly eyes see and ears hear. We see only our thoughts; and in some way they become externalized as our environment."

His reasoning faculty went busily on. Thought builds images, or mental concepts, within the mind. These are the thought-objects which mankind believe they see as material things in an outer world. And so the world is within, not without. Jesus must have known this when he said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Did he not know the tremendous effects of thought when he said, "For as a man thinketh, so is he"? In other words, a man builds his own mental image of himself, and conveys it to the fellow-minds about him.

José again opened his Bible at random. His eye fell upon the warning of Jeremiah, "Hear, O earth, behold I will bring evil upon this people, *even the fruit of their thoughts!*" Alas! he needed no warning to show him now the dire results of his own past wrong thinking.

Evil is but wrong thinking wrought out in life experience. And so the chief of sins is the breaking of the very first Commandment, the belief in other powers than God, the infinite mind that framed the spiritual universe.

"But we simply can't help breaking the Commandment," cried José, "when we see nothing but evil about us! And yet —we are seeing only the thoughts in our own minds. True—but how came they there? And whence? From God?"

José was quite ready to concede a mental basis for everything; to believe that even sin is but the thought of sin, false thought regarding God and His Creation. But, if God is all-inclusive mind, He must be *the only thinker*. And so all thought must proceed from Him. All thought, both good and evil? No, for then were God maintaining a house divided against itself. And that would mean His ultimate dissolution.

Infinite, omnipotent mind is by very logic *compelled* to be perfect. Then the thoughts issuing from that mind must be good. So it must follow that evil thoughts come from another source. But if God is infinite, there is no other source, no other cause. Then there is but the single alternative left—*evil thoughts must be unreal.*

What was it that the explorer had said to him in regard to Spencer's definition of reality? "That which endures." But, for that matter, evil seems to be just as enduring as good, and to run its course as undeviatingly. After all, what is it that says there is evil? The five physical senses. But that again reduces to the thought of evil, for men see only their thoughts. These so-called senses say that the world is flat—that the sun circles the earth—that objects diminish in size with distance. They testify not to truth. Jesus said that evil, or the "devil," was "a liar and the father of lies." Then the testimony of the physical senses to evil—and there is no other testimony to its existence and power—is a lie. A lie is—what? Nothing. Reason has had to correct sense-testimony in the field of astronomy and show that the earth is not flat. Where, indeed, has reason not had to correct sense-testimony? For José could now see that all such testimony was essentially false. "Things as they are have no truth in them." In other words, sense-testimony is false belief. Again, a lie. And the habitat of a lie is—nowhere. Did the world by clinging to evil and trying to make something of it, to classify it and reduce it to definite rules and terms, thus tend to make it real? Assuredly so. And as long as the world held evil to be real, could evil be overcome? Again, no. A reality endures forever.

José arose from his study. He believed he was close to the discovery of that solid basis of truth on which to stand while teaching Carmen. At any rate, her faith, which he could no longer believe to be baseless illusion, would not be shattered by him.

CHAPTER 11

TWO weeks after his arrival in Simití José conducted his first services in the ancient church. After four years of silence, the rusty bell sent out its raucous call from the old tower that still morning and announced the revival of public worship.

As the priest stepped from the sacristy and approached the altar his heart experienced a sudden sinking. Before him his little flock bowed reverently and expectantly. Looking out at

them, a lump rose in his throat. He was their pastor, and daily his love had grown for these kindly, simple folk. And now, what would he not have given could he have stretched forth his hands, as did the Master, to heal them of their ills and lift them out of the shadows of ignorance! Ah, if he could have thrown aside the mummery and pagan ceremonialism which he was there to conduct, and have sat down among them, as Jesus was wont to do on those still mornings in Galilee! Instead, he stood before them an apostate vassal of Rome, hypocritically using the Church to shield and maintain himself in Simití while he reared away from her the child Carmen.

Yet, what could he do? He had heard the call; and he had answered, "Master, here am I." And now he was occupying, while waiting to be led, step by step, out of his cruelly anomalous position and into his rightful domain. A traitor to Holy Church? Nay, he thought he would have been a traitor to all that was best and holiest within himself had he done otherwise. In the name of the Church he would serve these humble people. Serving them, he honored the Master. And honoring Christ, he could not dishonor the Church.

José's conduct of the Mass was perfunctory. Vainly he strove to hold in thought the symbolism of the service, the offering of Christ as a propitiation for the world's sins. But gradually the folly of Milton's extravagant, wild dream, which the poet clothed in such imperishable beauty, stole over him and blinded this vision. He saw the Holy Trinity sitting in solemn council in the courts of heaven. He heard their perplexed discussion of the ravages of Satan in the terrestrial paradise below. He heard the Father pronounce His awful curse upon mankind. And he beheld the Son rise and with celestial magnanimity offer himself as the sacrificial lamb, whose blood should wash away the serpent-stain of sin. How inept the whole drama!

And then he thought of Carmen. He had seen her, as he looked out over his people, sitting with Doña Maria, arrayed in a clean white frock, and swinging her plump bare legs beneath the bench, while wonder and amazement peered out from her big brown eyes as she followed his every move. What would such things mean to her, whose God was ever-present good? What did they mean to the priest himself, who was beginning to see Him as infinite, divine mind, knowing no evil—the One whose thoughts are not as ours?

He took up the holy water and sprinkled the assemblage. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." But how is the human mind purged of error? By giving it truth. And does the infinite

mind purge the thought of men in any other way? His mind was full as he took up the Missal. *"Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison."*

He hesitated. With a tug he pulled his mind back to the work before him. But why was he invoking clemency from One who knows no evil? Heretofore he had always thought that God knew evil, that He must recognize it, and that He strove Himself to overcome it. But if God knew evil, then evil were real and eternal! Dreamily he began to intone the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo.* All hail, thou infinite mind, whose measureless depths mortal man has not even begun to sound! His soul could echo that strain forever.

He turned to the Lesson and read: "But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." He stopped a moment for thought. The *Lord* God! The mist of error watered the false thought—the one lie about God—and out of it formed the man of flesh, the false concept which is held in the minds of mortals. Aye, it was the lie, posing as the Lord of creation, which had formed its false man out of the dust of the ground, and had forced it upon the acceptance of mankind! José turned back and read the whole of the first chapter of Genesis, where he felt that he stood upon truth.

The tapers on the altar flickered fitfully. The disturbed bats blundered among the rafters overhead. Outside, the dusty roads burned with a white glare. Within, he and the people were worshiping God. Worship? This? "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." In *Truth!*

José recited the Nicene creed, with the thought that its man-made fetters had bound the Christian world for dreary centuries. Then, the Preface and Canon concluded, he pronounced the solemn words of consecration which turned the bread and wine before him into the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus. He looked at the wafer and the chalice long and earnestly. He—José de Rincón—mortal, human, a weakling among weaklings—could he command God by his *"Hoc est enim corpus meum"* to descend from heaven to this altar? Could he so invoke the power of the Christ as to change bread and wine into actual flesh and blood? And yet, with all the priestly powers which Holy Church had conferred upon him, he could not heal a single bodily ill, nor avert one human misfortune!

Ah, pagan Rome! Well have you avenged yourself upon those who wrought your fall, for in the death conflict you left the taint of your paganism upon them, and it endures in their sons even to this fair day!

José deferred his sermon until the close of the service. He wanted time to think over again what he could say to these simple people. They sat before him, dull, inert, yet impressionable—bare of feet, or wearing hempen sandals, and clad in cheap cottons and calicos, with here and there a flash of bright ribbon among the women, and occasionally a parasol of brilliant hue, which the owner fondly clasped, while impatiently awaiting the close of the service that she might proudly parade it. A few of the men wore starched linen shirts, but without collars. The Alcalde, with his numerous family, and the family of Don Felipe Alcozer, sat well in front. The former regarded José expectantly, as the priest turned to deliver his simple sermon.

"My children," José began, "when the good man whom we call the Saviour sent his disciples out into the world he told them to preach the gospel and heal the sick. We have no record that he asked them to do more, for that included his whole mission. I am here to do his work. And, as I believe myself to have been led to you, so I shall preach what I believe to be given me by the great Father of us all. I shall teach you the Christ as I comprehend him. I would I could heal the sick as well. But the gift of healing which Jesus bestowed has been lost to mankind." He paused and seemed to think deeply. Then he continued:

"I am your servant, and your friend. I want you to believe that whatever I do in your midst and whatever I say to you follows only after I have prayerfully considered your welfare. As time has passed I have seemed to see things in a clearer light than before. What I may see in the future I shall point out to you as you are able to understand me. To that end we must suffer many things to be as they are for the present, for I am learning with you. I shall give you a single thought to take with you to-day. Jesus once said, 'As a man thinketh, so is he.' I want you to remember that, if you would be well and happy and prosperous, you must think only about good things. Some day you will see why this is so. But go back now to your *fincas* and your fishing, to your little stores and your humble homes, firmly resolving never to think a bad thought, whether about yourself or your neighbor. And pray for yourselves and me—"

He looked off into the gloom overhead. Again he seemed to hear the Man of Galilee: "Ask and ye shall receive."

"And, my children—"

He thought suddenly of Carmen and her visits to the shales. His face shone for a moment with a new light.

"—let your prayers be no mere requests that God will bless

us, but rather let them be statements that He is infinite good, and that He cannot do otherwise than give us all we need. No, I ask not that you intercede for me; nor shall I do so for you. But I do ask that you join with me in trying to realize that God is good; that He loves us as His dear children; and that He is daily, hourly pouring out His inexhaustible goodness upon us. We shall all see that goodness when we learn to think no evil."

His eyes rested upon Carmen as he spoke these last words. Then with a simple invocation he dismissed the congregation.

The Alcalde carried José off to dinner with him, much against the inclination of the priest, who preferred to be alone. But the Alcalde was the chief influence in the town, and it was policy to cultivate him.

"The blessed Virgin shows that she has not forgotten Simití, Padre, by sending you here," said Don Mario, when they were seated in the shade of the ample *patio.*

José knew the Alcalde was sounding him. "Yes, friend," with just a trace of amusement in his voice. "It was doubtless because of the Virgin that I was directed here," he replied, thinking of Carmen.

"Excellent advice that you gave the people, Padre; but it is not likely they understood you, poor fools! Now if Padre Diego had been preaching he would have ranted like a windstorm; but he would have made an impression. I am afraid soft words will not sink into their thick skulls."

Dinner was served in the open, during which the Alcalde chattered volubly.

"Don Rosendo returns soon?" he finally ventured. José knew that for some time he had been edging toward the question.

"*Quien sabe, señor!*" replied the priest, with a careless shrug of his shoulders.

"But—*Caramba!* he is old to prospect for gold—and alone, too!" Don Mario eyed José sharply.

"Ah, you priests!" he burst out laughing. "You are all alike when it comes to money. Padre Diego was up to the same schemes; and before he left he had a hat full of titles to mines."

"But I am not seeking to acquire mineral property!" exclaimed José with some aspersion.

"No? Then you had nothing to do with Rosendo's trip?"

José kept silence.

"*Na,* Padre, let us be confidential," said the Alcalde, hitching his chair closer to the priest. "Look, I understand why Rosendo went into the Guamocó country—but you can trust

me to say nothing about it. Only, Padre, if he should find the mine he will have trouble enough to hold it. But I can help you both. You know the denouncement papers must go through my hands, and I send them to Cartagena for registration."

He sat back in his chair with a knowing look.

"There is only one man here to be afraid of," he resumed; "and that is Don Felipe Alcozer; although he may never return to Simiti." He reflected a few moments. Then:

"Now, Padre, let us have some understanding about interests in the mine, should Rosendo find it. The mine will be useless to us unless we work it, for there is no one to buy it from us. To work it, we must have a stamp-mill, or *arrastras.* The Antioquanians are skilled in the making of wooden stamp-mills; but one would cost perhaps two thousand *pesos oro.* Nobody here can furnish so much money but Don Felipe. I will arrange with him for a suitable interest. And I will fix all the papers so that the title will be held by us three. Rosendo is only a *peon.* You can pay him for his trouble, and he need not have an interest."

José breathed easier while this recital was in progress. So Don Mario believed Rosendo to have gone in search of the lost mine, La Libertad! Good; for Cartagena would soon get the report, and his own tenure of the parish would be rendered doubly sure thereby. The monthly greasing of Wenceslas' palm with what Rosendo might extract from the Guamocó sands, coupled with the belief that José was maintaining a man in the field in search of Don Ignacio's lost mine, rendered Cartagena's interference a very remote contingency. He almost laughed as he replied:

"Rosendo will doubtless prospect for some months, Don Mario, and I am sure we shall have plenty of time to discuss any arrangement of interests later, should occasion arise. But this is the Sabbath day. So let us not talk business any further."

When the afternoon heat began to wane, José left the Alcalde and returned to his cottage. Since the service of the morning he had been fighting a constantly deepening sense of depression. An awful loneliness now gripped his heart, and dank gloom was again sweeping through the corridors of his soul. God, what a sacrifice, to remain buried in that dismal town! His continuance in the priesthood of an abjured faith was violative of every principle of honesty! The time would come when the mask of hypocrisy would have to be raised, and the resultant exposure would be worse then than open apostasy now!

He entered his dreary little abode and threw himself upon a chair. There had been no reaction like this for days. He looked out into the deserted street. Mud hovels; ragged, thatched roofs; lowly *peones* drowsing away life's little hour within! There was scarcely a book in the town. Few of its inhabitants could even read or write. Culture, education, refinement—all wanting. Nothing but primal existence—the barest necessities of real life. He could not stand it! He had been a fool all his years! He would throw everything to the winds and go out into the world to live his life as it had been intended he should live it. He would send his resignation to the Bishop to-morrow. Then he would hire Juan to take him to Bodega Central; and the few *pesos* he had left would get him to Barranquilla. There he would work until he had earned enough for his passage to the great States up north, of which the explorer had told such wonderful tales. Once there, he could teach, or—

His thought turned to Rosendo. He saw him, bent with age, and wearied with toil, alone in the awful solitude of the jungle, standing knee deep in the cold mountain water, while from early dawn till sunset he incessantly swung the heavy *batea* to concentrate the few flakes of precious gold it might contain. And the old man was facing years of just such loneliness and heavy toil—facing them gladly.

He thought of Carmen. Was she worth such sacrifice as he and Rosendo were making? God forgive him! Yes—a thousand times yes! If he betrayed Rosendo's confidence and fled like a coward now, leaving her to fall into the sooty hands of men like Padre Diego, to be crushed, warped, and squeezed into the molds of Holy Church, could he ever again face his fellow-men?

He jumped to his feet. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" he cried in a voice that echoed through the barren rooms. He smote his chest and paced the floor. Then he stopped still. He heard Carmen's voice again. It was the same simple melody she had sung the day he awoke from his fever. He stood listening. His eyes filled. Then—

"Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords
with might,
Smote the chord of self, that, trembling, passed in music
out of sight."

CHAPTER 12

IN the days that followed, while at times José still struggled desperately against the depression of his primal environment, and against its insidious suggestions of license, Carmen moved before him like the shechinah of Israel, symbolizing the divine presence. When the dark hours came and his pronounced egoism bade fair to overwhelm him; when his self-centered thought clung with the tenacity of a limpet to his dreary surroundings and his unfilled longings; when self-condemnation and self-pity rived his soul, and despair of solving life's intricate problems settled again like a pall upon him, he turned to her. Under the soft influence of her instinct for primitive good, he was learning, even if slowly, to jettison his heavily laden soul, and day by day to ride the tossing waves of his stormy thought with a lighter cargo. Her simple faith in immanent good was working upon his mind like a spiritual catharsis, to purge it of its clogging beliefs. Her unselfed love flowed over him like heavenly balm, salving the bleeding wounds of the spiritual mayhem which he had suffered at the violent hands of Holy Church's worldly agents.

Carmen's days were filled to the brim with a measure of joy that constantly overflowed upon all among whom she moved. Her slight dependence upon her impoverished material environment, her contempt of its *ennui*, were constant reminders to José that heaven is but a state of mind. Even in desolate Simití, life to her was an endless series of delightful experiences, of wonderful surprises in the discovery of God's presence everywhere. Her enthusiasms were always ardent and inexhaustible. Sparkling animation and abounding vitality characterized her every movement. Her thought was free, unstrained, natural, and untrammeled by those inherited and educated beliefs in evil in which José had early been so completely swamped. In worldly knowledge she was the purest novice; and the engaging *naïveté* with which she met the priest's explanations of historical events and the motives from which they sprang charmed him beyond measure, and made his work with her a constant delight. Her sense of humor was keen, and her merriment when his recitals touched her risibility was extravagant. She laughed at danger, laughed at the weaknesses and foibles of men, when he told of the political and social ambitions which stirred mankind in the outside world. But he knew that her merriment proceeded not from an ephemeral sense of the ludicrous, but from a righteous ap-

praisal of the folly and littleness of those things for which the world so sorely strives.

And daily the little maid wrapped herself about his heart. Daily her wondrous love coiled its soft folds tighter around him, squeezing from his atrabilious soul, drop by drop, its sad taciturnity and inherent morbidness, that it might later fill his empty life with a spiritual richness which he had never known before.

On the day following the opening of the church Carmen had asked many questions. It was the first religious service she had ever voluntarily attended. To her former queries regarding the function of the church edifice, Rosendo had vouchsafed but one reply: it was the house of God, and in it the people used to gather to learn of Him. But she protested that she had no need of the musty, ramshackle, barn-like old building as a locus in which to center her thought upon God. She walked with Him, and she much preferred the bright, sunlit out-of-doors in which to commune with Him. José explained the need of a central gathering place as a shelter from the hot sun. But the images—the pictures of Saints and Virgin—and the Mass itself?

"They are what the people are accustomed to, dear child, to direct their thought toward God," he explained. "And we will use them until we can teach them something better." He had omitted from the church service as far as possible the collects and all invocations addressed to the Virgin and the Saints, and had rendered it short and extremely simple. Carmen seemed satisfied with his explanation, and with his insistence that, for the sake of appearance, she attend the Sunday services. He would trust her God to guide them both.

The days sped by silently and swiftly. José and the child dwelt together apart from the world, in a universe purely mental. As he taught her, she hung upon his every word, and seized the proffered tutelage with avidity. Often, after the day's work, José, in his customary strolls about the little town, would come across the girl in the doorway of a neighboring house, with a group of wide-eyed youngsters about her, relating again the wonder-tales which she had gathered from him. Marvelous tales they were, too, of knight and *hidalgo*, of court and camp, of fairies, pyxies, gnomes and sprites, of mossy legend and historic fact, bubbling from the girl's childish lips with an engaging *naïveté* of interpretation that held the man enchanted. Even the schoolmaster, who had besought José in vain to turn Carmen over to him, was often a spellbound listener at these little gatherings.

The result was that in a short time a delegation, headed

by the Alcalde himself, waited upon José and begged him to lecture to the people of Simití in the church building at least two or three evenings a week upon places and people he had seen in the great world of which they knew nothing. José's eyes were moist as he looked at the great, brawny men, stout of heart, but simple as children. He grieved to give up his evenings, for he had formed the habit of late of devoting them to the study of his Bible, and to meditation on those ideas which had so recently come to him. But the appeal from these innocent, untutored people again quenched the thought of self, and he bade them be assured that their request was granted.

The new ideas which had found entrance into José's liberated mentality in the past few days had formed a basis on which he was not afraid to stand while teaching Carmen; and his entire instruction was thenceforth colored by them. He knew not why, in all the preceding years, such ideas had not come to him before. But he was to learn, some day, that his previous tenacious clinging to evil as a reality, together with his material beliefs and his worldly intellectuality, had stood as barriers at the portals of his thought, and kept the truth from entering. His mind had been already full—but its contents were unbelief, fear, the conviction of evil as real and operative, and the failure to know God as immanent, omnipotent and perfect mind, to whom evil is forever unknown and unreal. Pride, egoism, and his morbid sense of honesty had added their portion to the already impassable obstruction at the gateway of his thought. And so the error had been kept within, the good without. The "power of the Lord" had not been absent; but it had remained unapplied. Thus he had wandered through the desolate wilderness; but yet sustained and kept alive, that he should not go down to the pit.

José's days were now so crowded that he was forced to borrow heavily from the night. The Alcalde continued his unctuous flattery, and the priest, in turn, cultivated him assiduously. To that official's query as to the restitution of the confessional in the church, the priest replied that he could spare time to hear only such confessions from his flock as might be necessary to elicit from him the advice or assistance requisite for their needs. He was there to help them solve their life problems, not to pry into their sacred secrets; and their confessions must relate only to their necessities.

The Alcalde went away with a puzzled look. Of a truth a new sort of priest had now to be reckoned with in Simití—a very different sort from Padre Diego.

In the first days of José's incumbency he found many seri-

ous matters to adjust. He had learned from Rosendo that not half the residents of Simití were married to the consorts with whom they lived, and that many of the children who played in the streets did not know who their fathers were. So prevalent was this evil condition that the custom among the men of having their initials embroidered upon the bosoms of their shirts was extended to include the initial of the mother's family name. José had questioned Rosendo as to the meaning of the letters R. A. S. upon his shirt.

"The S, Padre, is the initial of my mother's family name. I am Rosendo Ariza, son of the daughter of Saurez. My parents were married by a priest. But half the people of Simití have never been really married."

José sought the cause of this dereliction. Fidel Avila was living with a woman, by whom he had three children. The priest summoned him to the parish house.

"Fidel," he questioned sternly, "Jacinta, the woman you live with, is your wife?"

"Yes, *Señor Padre.*"

"And you were married by the Church?"

"No, Padre."

"But was there a priest here when you began to live with Jacinta?"

"Yes, Padre. The *Cura,* Don Diego Polo, was here."

"Then why were you not married by him? Do you not know how wicked it is to live as you are doing? Think of your children!"

"Yes, Padre, and I asked the *Cura,* Don Diego, to marry us. But he charged twenty *pesos oro* for doing it; and I could not afford it. I loved Jacinta. And so we decided to live together without the marriage."

"But—!" José stopped. He knew that the Church recognized no marriage unless it were performed by a priest. The civil magistrate had no jurisdiction in such a case. And a former priest's rapacity had resulted in forcing illegitimacy upon half the children of this benighted hamlet, because of their parents' inability to afford the luxury of a canonical marriage.

"Fidel, were your father and mother married?" he asked in kinder tones.

"I do not know, Padre. Only a few people in Guamocó can afford to pay to be married. The men and women live together, perhaps for all time, perhaps for only a few months. If a man wishes to leave his woman and live with another, he does so. If there are children, the woman always has to keep and care for them."

"And could you leave Jacinta if you wished, and live with another woman?"

"Yes, Padre."

"And she would have to take care of your children?"

"Yes."

"And all because you are not married?"

"I think so, Padre."

"Hombre! But that will do, Fidel."

Oh, the sordid greed of those who abuse their sacred commission! What punishment is mete for such as exploit these lowly folk in the name of religion! José strode off to consult the Alcalde.

"Don Mario, the men in Simití who are living with women have *got* to be married to them! It is shameful! I shall make a canvass of the town at once!"

The Alcalde laughed. *"Costumbre,* Padre. You can't change it."

Costumbre del país! It is a final answer all through South America. No matter how unreasonable a thing may be, if it is the custom of the country it is a Medean law.

"But you know this is subversive of Church discipline!" José retorted warmly. "Look you, Don Mario," he added suggestively, "you and I are to work together, are we not?"

The Alcalde blinked his pig eyes, but thought hard about La Libertad. *"Cierto, Señor Padre!"* he hastened to exclaim.

"Then I demand that you summon before me every man and woman who are living together unmarried."

With a thought single to his own future advantage, the wary Alcalde complied. Within the week following this interview José married twenty couples, and without charge. Some offered him a few *pesos.* These he took and immediately turned over to Don Mario as treasurer of the parish. Those couples who refused to be married were forced by the Alcalde to separate. But of these there were few. Among them was one Julio Gomez. Packing his few household effects upon his back, and muttering imprecations against the priest, Gomez set out for the hills, still followed by his woman, with a babe slung over her shoulders and two naked children toddling at her bare heels.

Verily, the ancient town was being profoundly stirred by the man who had sought to find his tomb there. Gradually the people lost their suspicions and distrust, bred of former bitter experience with priests, and joined heartily with José to ameliorate the social status of the place. His sincere love for them, and his utter selflessness, secured their confidence, and ere his first month among them closed, he had won them, almost to a man.

Meantime, six weeks had passed since Rosendo had departed to take up his lonely task of self-renouncing love. Then one day he returned, worn and emaciated, his great frame shaking like a withered leaf in a chill blast.

"It is the *terciana,* Padre," he said, as he sank shuddering upon his bed. "It comes every third day. I went as far as Tachí—fifty leagues from Simití—and there the fever overtook me. I have been eight days coming back; and day before yesterday I ran out of food. Last evening I found a wild melon at the side of the trail. A coral snake struck at me when I reached for it, but he hit my *machete* instead. *Caramba!*"

José pressed his wet hand, while Doña Maria laid damp cloths upon his burning forehead.

"The streams are washed out, Padre," Rosendo continued sadly. "I worked at Colorado, Popales, and Tambora. But I got no more than five *pesos* worth. And that will not pay for half of my supplies. It is there in a little bag," pointing to his soaked and muddy kit.

José's heart was wrung by the suffering and disappointment of the old man. Sadly he carried the little handful of gold flakes to Don Mario, and then returned to the exhausted Rosendo.

All through the night the sick man tossed and moaned. By morning he was delirious. Then José and Doña Maria became genuinely alarmed. The toil and exposure had been too much for Rosendo at his advanced age. In his delirium he talked brokenly of the swamps through which he had floundered, for he had taken the trail in the wet season, and fully half of its one hundred and fifty miles of length was oozy and all but impassable bog.

By afternoon the fever had greatly increased. Don Mario shook his head as he stood over him.

"I have seen many in that condition, Padre, and they didn't wake up! If we had quinine, perhaps he might be saved. But there isn't a flake in the town."

"Then send Juan to Bodega Central at once for it!" cried José, wild with apprehension.

"I doubt if he would find it there either, Padre. But we can try. However, Juan cannot make the trip in less than two days. And I fear Rosendo will not last that long."

Doña Maria sat by the bedside, dumb with grief. José wrung his hands in despair. The day drew slowly to a close. The Alcalde had dispatched Juan down to the river to signal any steamer that he should meet, if perchance he might purchase a few grains of the only drug that could save the sick man. Carmen had absented herself during the day; but she

returned in time to assist Doña Maria with the evening meal, after which she went at once to her bed.

Late at night, when the sympathizing townsmen had sorrowfully departed and José had induced Doña Maria to seek a few moments rest on her *petate* in the living room, Carmen climbed quietly out of her bed and came to where the priest sat alone with the unconscious Rosendo.

José was bending over the delirious man. "Oh, if Jesus were only here now!" he murmured.

"Padre dear."

José looked down into the little face beside him.

"People don't die, you know. They don't really die." The little head shook as if to emphasize the words.

José was startled. But he put his arm about the child and drew her to him. *"Chiquita,* why do you say that?" he asked sorrowfully.

"Because God doesn't die, you know," she quickly replied. "And we are like Him, Padre, aren't we?"

"But He calls us to him, *chiquita.* And—I guess—He is—is calling your padre Rosendo now."

Does God kill mankind in order to give them life? Is that His way? Death denies God, eternal Life. And—

"Why, no, Padre," returned the innocent child. "He is always here; and we are always with Him, you know. He can not call people away from where He is, can He?"

Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. The Christ-principle, the saving truth about God and man, is ever present in an uncomprehending world.

José knew that there was no material dependence now. Something told him that Rosendo lay dying. There was no physician, no drug, in the isolated little town. There was none but God to save. And He—

But only sinners are taught by priests and preachers to look to God for help. The sick are not so taught. How much more deplorable, then, is their condition than that of the wicked!

"I told God out on the shales this afternoon that I just *knew* padre Rosendo wouldn't die!" The soft, sweet voice hovered on the silence like celestial melody.

If ye ask anything in my name—in my character—*it shall be given you.* Carmen asked in the character of the sinless Christ, for her asking was an assertion of what she instinctively knew to be truth, despite the evidence of the physical senses. Her petitions were affirmations of Immanuel—God with us.

"Carmen," whispered the priest hoarsely, "go back to your

bed, and know, just *know* that God is here! Know that He did not make padre Rosendo sick, and that He will not let him die! Know it for him—and for me!"

"Why, Padre, I know that now!" The child looked up into the priest's face with her luminous eyes radiating unshaken trust—a trust that seemed born of understanding. Yea, she knew that all good was there, for God is omnipotent. They had but to stretch forth their hands to touch the robe of His Christ. The healing principle which cleansed the lepers and raised the dead was even with them there in that quiet room. José had only to realize it, nothing doubting. Carmen had done her work, and her mind now was stayed on Him. Infinite Intelligence did not know Rosendo as José was trying to know him, sick and dying. God is Life—and there is no death!

Carmen was again asleep. José sat alone, his open Bible before him and his thought with his God.

Oh, for even a slight conception of Him who is Life! Moses worked "as seeing Him who is invisible." Carmen lived with her eyes on Him, despite her dreary mundane encompassment. And José, as he sat there throughout the watches of the night, facing the black terror, was striving to pierce the mist which had gone up from the face of the ground and was separating him from his God. Through the long, dark hours, with the quiet of death upon the desolate chamber, he sat mute before the veil that was "still untaken away."

What was it that kept telling him that Rosendo lay dying before him? Does matter talk? Did the serpent talk to Eve? Do fleshly nerves and frail bodily organs converse with men? Can the externalization of thought report back to the thought itself? Nay, the report came to him from the physical senses—naught else. And they reported—nothing! He was seeing but his own thoughts of mixed good and evil. And they were false, because they testified against God.

Surely God knew Rosendo. But not as the physical senses were trying to make José know him, sick and dying. Surely the subjective determines the objective; for as we think, so are we—the Christ said that. From his human standpoint José was seeing his thoughts of a dying mortal. And now he was trying to know that those thoughts did not come from God—that they had no authority back of them—that they were children of the "one lie" about God—that they were false, false as hell, and therefore impotent and unreal.

What, then, had he to fear? Nothing, for truth is beyond the reach of personal sense. So God and His ideas, reflected by the real Rosendo, were beyond the reach of evil.

If this were true, then he must clear his own mentality—

even as he now knew Carmen had done out on the shales that afternoon. He was no longer dealing with a material Rosendo, but with false beliefs about a son of God. He was handling mental concepts. And to the serpent, error, he was trying to say: "What is your authority?"

If man lives, he never dies. If man is, then he always has been. And he was never born—and never passes into oblivion. A fact never changes. If two and two make four to-day, they always have done so, and always will.

Can good produce evil? Then evil can have no creator. Rosendo, when moved by good, had gone into the wilds of Guamocó on a mission of love. Did evil have power to smite him for his noble sacrifice?

What is this human life of ours? Real existence? No, but a sense of existence—and a false sense, for it postulates a god of evil opposed to the one supreme Creator of all that really is. Then the testimony that said Rosendo must die was cruelly false. And, more, it was powerless—unless José himself gave it power.

Did Carmen know that? Had she so reasoned? Assuredly no! But she knew God as José had never known Him. And, despite the testimony of the fleshly eyes, she had turned from physical sense to Him.

"It is not practicable!" the world cries in startled protest. But, behold her life!

José had begun to see that discord was the result of unrighteousness, false thought. He began to understand why it was that Jesus always linked disease with sin. His own paradoxical career had furnished ample proof of that. Yet his numberless tribulations were not due solely to his own wrong thinking, but likewise to the wrong thought of others with respect to him, thought which he knew not how to neutralize. And the channels for this false, malicious, carnal thought had been his beloved parents, his uncle, the Archbishop, his tutors, and, in fact, all with whom he had been associated until he came to Simití. There he had found Carmen. And there the false thought had met a check, a reversal. The evil had begun to destroy itself. And he was slowly awaking to find nothing but good.

The night hours flitted through the heavy gloom like spectral acolytes. Rosendo sank into a deep sleep. The steady roll of the frogs in the lake at length died away. A flush stole timidly across the eastern sky.

"Padre dear, he will not die."

It was Carmen's voice that awoke the slumbering priest. The child stood at his side, and her little hand clasped his.

Rosendo slept. His chest rose and fell with the rhythmic breathing. José looked down upon him. A great lump came into his throat, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"You are right, *chiquita*. Go, call your madre Maria now, and I will go home to rest."

CHAPTER 13

THAT day Rosendo left his bed. Two days later he again set out for Guamocó.

"There *is* gold there, and I must, *I will* find it!" he repeatedly exclaimed as he pushed his preparations.

The courage of the man was magnificent. On its rebound it carried him over the protest of Doña Maria and the gloomy forebodings of his fellow-townsmen, and launched him again on the desolate trail.

But José had uttered no protest. He moved about wrapped in undefinable awe. For he believed he had seen Rosendo lifted from the bed of death. And no one might tell him that it was not by the same power that long ago had raised the dead man of Nain. Carmen had not spoken of the incident again; and something laid a restraint upon José's lips.

The eyes of the Alcalde bulged with astonishment when Rosendo entered his store that morning in quest of further supplies.

"Caramba! Go back to your bed, *compadre!"* he exclaimed, bounding from his chair. "You are walking in your delirium!"

"Na, amigo," replied Rosendo with a smile, "the fever has left me. And now I must have another month's supplies, for I go back to Guamocó as soon as my legs tremble less."

"Caramba! caramba!"

The Alcalde acted as if he were in the presence of a ghost. But at length becoming convinced that Rosendo was there on matters of business, and in his right mind, he checked further expression of wonder and, with a shrug of his fat shoulders, assumed his wonted air of a man of large affairs.

"I can allow you five *pesos oro* on account of the gold which the *Cura* brought me yesterday," he said severely. "But that leaves you still owing ten *pesos* for your first supplies; and thirty if I give you what you ask for now. If you cannot pay this amount when you return, you will have to work it out for me."

His little eyes grew steely and cold. Rosendo well knew what the threat implied. But he did not falter.

"*Bien, compadre,*" he quietly replied, "it will be as you say."

Late that afternoon Juan returned from Bodega Central with a half ounce of quinine. He had made the trip with astonishing celerity, and had arrived at the riverine town just as a large steamer was docking. The purser supplied him with the drug, and he immediately started on his return.

The Alcalde set out to deliver the drug to Rosendo; but not finding him at home, looked in at the parish house. José and Carmen were deep in their studies.

"A thousand pardons, *Señor Padre*, but I have the medicine you ordered for Rosendo," placing the small package upon the table.

"You may set it down against me, Don Mario," said José.

"No!" exclaimed the Alcalde, "this must not be charged to the parish!"

"I said to me, *amigo*," replied the priest firmly.

"It is the same thing, Padre!" blurted the petty merchant.

The priest's anger began to rise, but he restrained it. "Padre Diego is no longer here, you must remember," he said quietly.

"But the parish pays your debts; and it would not pay the full value of this and Juan's trip," was the coarse retort.

"Very well, then, Don Mario," answered José. "You may charge it to Rosendo. But tell me first how much you will place against him for it."

The Alcalde reflected a moment. "The quinine will be five *pesos oro*, and Juan's trip three additional. Is it not worth it?" he demanded, blustering before José's steady gaze. "If Rosendo had been really sick it would have saved his life!"

"Then you do not believe he was dangerously ill?" asked José with some curiosity.

"He couldn't have been really sick and be around to-day—could he?" the Alcalde demanded.

The priest glanced at Carmen. She met the look with a smile.

"No," he said slowly, "not *really* sick." Then he quickly added:

"If you charge Rosendo eight *pesos* for that bit of quinine, Don Mario, you and I are no longer working together, for I do not take base advantage of any man's necessities."

The Alcalde became confused. He was going too far. "*Na, Señor Padre,*" he said hastily, with a sheepish grin. "I will leave the quinine with you, and do you settle the account with Juan." With which he beat a disordered retreat.

José was thankful that, for a few months, at least, he would have a powerful hold on this man through his rapacity. What

would happen when the Alcalde at length learned that Rosendo was not searching for Don Ignacio's lost mine, he did not care to conjecture. That matter was in other hands than his, and he was glad to leave it there. He asked now only to see each single step as he progressed.

"Did Don Mario say that stuff would cure padre Rosendo?" asked Carmen, pointing to the quinine.

"Yes, *chiquita.*"

"Why did he say so, Padre?"

"Because he really believed it, *carita.*"

"But what is it, Padre—and how can it cure sick people?"

"It is the bark of a certain tree, little one, that people take as medicine. It is a sort of poison which people take to counteract another poison. A great school of medicine is founded upon that principle, Carmen," he added. And then he fell to wondering if it really was a principle, after all. If so, it was evil overcoming evil. But would the world believe that both he and Rosendo had been cured by—what? Faith? True prayer? By the operation of a great, almost unknown principle? Or would it scoff at such an idea?

But what cared he for that? He saw himself and Rosendo restored, and that was enough. He turned to the child. "They think the quinine cures fever, little one," he resumed.

"And does it?" The little face wore an anxious look as she put the question.

"They think it does, *chiquita,*" replied the priest, wondering what he should say.

"But it is just because they think so that they get well, isn't it?" the girl continued.

"I guess it is, child."

"And if they thought right they would be cured without this—is it not so, Padre dear?"

"I am sure of it—now," replied the priest. "In fact, if they always kept their thoughts right I am sure they would never be sick."

"You mean, if they always thought about God," the child amended.

"Yes—I mean just that. If they knew, *really knew,* that God is everywhere, that He is good, and that He never makes people sick, they would always be well."

"Of course, Padre. It is only their bad thoughts that make them sick. And even then they are not really sick," the child concluded. "They think they are, and they think they die—and then they wake up and find it isn't so at all."

Had the child made this remark to him a few weeks before, he had crushed it with the dull, lifeless, conventional formulae

of human belief. To-day in penitent humility he was trying to walk hand in hand with her the path she trod. For he was learning from her that righteousness is salvation. A few weeks ago he had lain at death's door, yearning to pass the portal. Yesterday he believed he had again seen the dark angel, hovering over the stricken Rosendo. But in each case *something* had intervened. Perhaps that "something not ourselves that makes for righteousness," the unknown, almost unacknowledged force that ceases not to combat evil in the human consciousness. Clinging to his petty egoisms; hugging close his shabby convictions of an evil power opposed to God; stuffed with worldly learning and pride of race and intellect, in due season, as he sank under the burden of his imaginings, the veil had been drawn aside for a fleeting moment—and his soul had frozen with awe at what it beheld!

For, back of the density of the human concept, the fleeting, inexplicable medley of good and evil which constitutes the phenomenon of mortal existence, *he had seen God!* He had seen Him as all-inclusive mind, omnipotent, immanent, perfect, eternal. He had caught a moment's glimpse of the tremendous Presence which holds all wisdom, all knowledge, yet knows no evil. He had seen a blinding flash of that "something" toward which his life had strained and yearned. With it had come a dim perception of the falsity of the testimony of physical sense, and the human life that is reared upon it. And though he counted not himself to have apprehended as yet, he was struggling, even with thanksgiving, up out of his bondage, toward the gleam. The shafts of error hissed about him, and black doubt and chill despair still felled him with their awful blows. But he walked with Carmen. With his hand in hers, he knew he was journeying toward God.

On the afternoon before his departure Rosendo entered the parish house in apprehension. "I have lost my *escapulario*, Padre!" he exclaimed. "The string caught in the brush, and the whole thing was torn from my neck. I—I don't like to go back without one," he added dubiously.

"Ah, then you have nothing left but Christ," replied José with fine irony. "Well, it is of no consequence."

"But, Padre, it had been blessed by the Bishop!"

"Well, don't worry. Why, the Holy Father himself once blessed this republic of ours, and now it is about the most unfortunate country in the whole world! But you are a good Catholic, Rosendo, so you need not fear."

Rosendo was, indeed, a good Catholic. He accepted the faith of his fathers without reserve. He had never known any other. Simple, superstitious, and great of heart, he held with

rigid credulity to all that had been taught him in the name of religion. But until José's advent he had feared and hated priests. Nevertheless, his faith in signs and miracles and the healing power of blessed images was child-like. Once when he saw in the store of Don Mario a colored chromo of Venus and Cupid, a cheap print that had come with goods imported from abroad, he had devoutly crossed himself, believing it to be the Virgin Mary with the Christ-child.

"But I will fix you up, Rosendo," said José, noting the man's genuine anxiety. "Have Doña Maria cut out a cloth heart and fasten it to a stout cord. I will take it to the church altar and bless it before the image of the Virgin. You told me once that the Virgin was the Rincón family's patron, you know."

"Bueno!" ejaculated the pleased Rosendo, as he hastened off to execute the commission.

Several times before Rosendo went back to Guamocó José had sought to draw him into conversation about his illness, and to get his view of the probable cause of his rapid recovery. But the old man seemed loath to dwell on the topic, and José could get little from him. At any mention of the episode a troubled look would come over his face, and he would fall silent, or would find an excuse to leave the presence of the priest.

"Rosendo," José abruptly remarked to him as he was busy with his pack late the night before his departure, "will you take with you the quinine that Juan brought?"

Rosendo looked up quickly. "I can not, Padre."

"And why?"

"On account of Carmen."

"But what has she to do with it, *amigo?*" José asked in surprise.

Rosendo looked embarrassed. "I—*Bien*, Padre, I promised her I would not."

"When?"

"To-day, Padre."

José reflected on the child's unusual request. Then:

"But if you fell sick up in Guamocó, Rosendo, what could you do?"

"Quien sabe, Padre! Perhaps I could gather herbs and make a tea—I don't know. She didn't say anything about that." He looked at José and laughed. Then, in an anxious tone:

"Padre, what can I do? The little Carmen asks me not to take the quinine, and I can not refuse her. But I may get sick. I—I have always taken medicine when I needed it and could get it. But the only medicine we have in Simití is the stuff

that some of the women make—teas and drinks brewed from roots and bark. I have never seen a doctor here, nor any real medicines but quinine. And even that is hard to get, as you know. I used to make a salve out of the livers of *mápina* snakes—it was for the rheumatism—I suffered terribly when I worked in the cold waters in Guamocó. I think the salve helped me. But if I should get the disease now, would Carmen let me make the salve again?"

He bent over his outfit for some moments. "She says if I trust God I will not get sick," he at length resumed. "She says I must not think about it. *Caramba!* What has that to do with it? People get sick whether they think about it or not. Do you believe, Padre, this new *escapulario* will protect me?"

The man's words reflected the strange mixture of mature and childish thought typical of these untutored jungle folk, in which longing for the good is so heavily overshadowed by an educated belief in the power of evil.

"Rosendo," said José, finding at last his opportunity, "tell me, do you think you were seriously ill day before yesterday?"

"*Quien sabe,* Padre! Perhaps it was only the *terciana,* after all."

"Well, then," pursuing another tack, "do you think I was very sick that day when I rushed to the lake—?"

"*Caramba,* Padre! But you were turning cold—you hardly breathed—we all thought you must die—all but Carmen!"

"And what cured me, Rosendo?" the priest asked in a low, steady voice.

"Why—Padre, I can not say."

"Nor can I, positively, my friend. But I do know that the little Carmen said I should not die. And she said the same of you when, as I would swear, you were in the fell clutches of the death angel himself."

"Padre—" Rosendo's eyes were large, and his voice trembled in awesome whisper—"is she—the little Carmen—is she —an *hada?*"

"A witch? *Hombre!* No!" cried José, bursting into a laugh at the perturbed features of the older man. "No, *amigo,* she is not an *hada!* Let us say, rather, as you first expressed it to me, she is an angel—and let us appreciate her as such.

"But," he continued, "I tell you in all seriousness, there are things that such as you and I, with our limited outlook, have never dreamed of; and that child seems to have penetrated the veil that hides spiritual things from the material vision of men like us. Let us wait, and if we value that '*something*' which she seems to possess and know how to use, let us cut off our right hands before we yield to the temptation to place any

obstacle in the way of her development along the lines which she has chosen, or which some unseen Power has chosen for her. It is for you and me, Rosendo, to stand aside and watch, while we protect her, if haply we may be privileged some day to learn her secret in full. You and I are the unlearned, while she is filled with wisdom. The world would say otherwise, and would condemn us as fools. Thank God we are out of the world here in Simití!"

He choked back the inrush of memories and brushed away a tear.

"Rosendo," he concluded, "be advised. If Carmen told you not to think of sickness while in Guamocó, then follow her instructions. It is not the child, but a mighty Power that is speaking through her. Of that I have long been thoroughly convinced. And I am as thoroughly convinced that that same Power has appointed you and me her protectors and her followers. You and I have a mighty compact—"

"Hombre!" interrupted Rosendo, clasping the priest's hand, "my life is hers—you know it—she has only to speak, and I obey! Is it not so?"

"Assuredly, Rosendo," returned José. "And now a final word. Let us keep solely to ourselves what we have learned of her. Our plans are well formulated. Let us adhere to them in strict silence. I know not whither we are being led. But we are in the hands of that 'something' that speaks and works through her—and we are satisfied. Are we not?"

They clasped hands again. The next morning Rosendo set his face once more toward the emerald hills of Guamocó.

As the days passed, José became more silent and thoughtful. But it was a silence bred of wonder and reverence, as he dwelt upon the things that had been revealed to him. Who and what was this unusual child, so human, and yet so strangely removed from the world's plane of thought? A child who understood the language of the birds, and heard the grass grow—a child whom Torquemada would have burnt as a witch, and yet with whom he could not doubt the Christ dwelt.

José often studied her features while she bent over her work. He spent hours, too, poring over the little locket which had been found among her mother's few effects. The portrait of the man was dim and soiled. José wondered if the poor woman's kisses and tears had blurred it. The people of Badillo said she had died with it pressed to her lips. But its condition rendered futile all speculation in regard to its original. That of the mother, however, was still fresh and clear. José conjectured that she must have been either wholly Spanish, or one of the more refined and cultured women of Colombia. And she

had doubtless been very young and beautiful when the portrait was made. With what dark tragedy was that little locket associated? Would it ever yield its secret?

But Carmen's brown curls and light skin—whence came they? Were they wholly Latin? José had grave doubts. And her keen mind, and deep religious instinct? Who knew? He could only be sure that they had come from a source far, far above her present lowly environment. With that much he must for the present be content.

* * * * * *

Another month unfolded its length in quiet days, and Rosendo again returned. Not ill this time, nor even much exhausted. Nor did the little leathern pouch contain more than a few *pesos* in gold dust. But determination was written grim and trenchant upon his black face as he strode into the parish house and extended his great hand to the priest.

"I have only come for more supplies, Padre," he said. "I have some three *pesos* worth of gold. Most of this I got around Culata, near Don Felipe's quartz vein, the Andandodias. *Caramba,* what veins in those hills! If we had money to build a mill, and knew how to catch the gold, we would not need to wash the river sands that have been gone over again and again for hundreds of years!"

But José's thoughts were of the Alcalde. He determined to send for him at once, while Rosendo was removing the soil of travel.

Don Mario came and estimated the weight of the gold by his hand. Then he coolly remarked: *"Bien, Señor Padre,* I will send Rosendo to my *hacienda* to-morrow to cut cane and make *panela."*

"And how is that, Don Mario?" inquired José.

The Alcalde began to bluster. "He owes me thirty *pesos oro,* less this, if you wish me to keep it. I see no likelihood that he can ever repay me. And so he must now work out his debt."

"How long will that take him, *amigo?"*

"Quien sabe? Señor Padre," the Alcalde replied, his eyes narrowing.

The priest braced himself, and his face assumed an expression that it had not worn before he came to Simití. "Look you now, my friend," he began in tones pregnant with meaning. "I have made some inquiries regarding your system of peonage. I find that you pay your *peones* from twenty to thirty cents a day for their hard labor, and at the same time charge them as much a day for food. Or you force them to buy from you tobacco and rum at prices which keep them always in your debt. Is it not so?"

"Na, Padre, you have been misinformed," the Alcalde demurred, with a deprecating gesture.

"I have not. Lázaro Ortiz is now working for you on that system. And daily he becomes more deeply indebted to you, is it not so?"

"But, Padre—"

"It is useless for you to deny it, Don Mario, for I have facts. Now listen to me. Let us understand each other clearly, nor attempt to dissimulate. That iniquitous system of peonage has got to cease in my parish!"

"Caramba, but Padre Diego had *peones!"* the Alcalde exploded.

"And he was a wicked man," added José. Then he continued:

"I know not what information you may have from the Bishop regarding me, yet this I tell you: I shall report you to Bogotá, and I will band the citizens of Simití together to drive you out of town, if you do not at once release Lázaro, and put an end to this wicked practice. The people will follow if I lead!"

It was a bold stroke, and the priest knew that he was standing upon shaky ground. But the man before him was superstitious, untutored and child-like. A show of courage, backed by an assertion of authority, might produce the desired effect. Moreover, José knew that he was in the right. And right must prevail!

Don Mario glared at him, while an ugly look spread over his coarse features. The priest went on:

"Lázaro has long since worked out his debt, and you shall release him at once. As to Rosendo, he must have the supplies he needs to return to Guamocó. You understand?"

"Caramba!" Don Mario's face was purple with rage. "You think you can tell me what to do—me, the Alcalde!" he volleyed. "You think you can make us change our customs! *Caramba!* You are no better than the priest Diego, whom you try to make me believe so wicked! *Hombre,* you were driven out of Cartagena yourself! A nice sort to be teaching a little girl—!"

"Stop, man!" thundered José, striding toward him with upraised arm.

Don Mario fell back in his chair and quailed before the mountainous wrath of the priest.

A shadow fell across the open doorway. Glancing up, José saw Carmen. For a moment the girl stood looking in wonder at the angry men. Then she went quickly to the priest and slipped a hand into his. A feeling of shame swept over him,

and he went back to his chair. Carmen leaned against him, but she appeared to be confused. Silence fell upon them all.

"Cucumbra doesn't fight any more, Padre," the girl at length began in hesitation. "He and the puppy play together all the time now. He has learned a lot, and now he loves the puppy."

So had the priest learned much. He recalled the lesson. *"Bien,"* he said in soft tones, "I think we became a bit too earnest, Don Mario. We are good friends, is it not so? And we are working together for the good of Simití. But to have good come to us, we must do good to others."

He went to his trunk and took out a wallet. "Here are twenty *pesos*, Don Mario." It was all he had in the world, but he did not tell the Alcalde so. "Take them on Rosendo's account. Let him have the new supplies he needs, and I will be his surety. And, friend, you are going to let me prove to you with time that the report you have from Cartagena regarding me is false."

Don Mario's features relaxed somewhat when his hand closed over the grimy bills.

"Do not forget, *amigo*," added José, assuming an air of mystery as he pursued the advantage, "that you and I are associated in various business matters, is it not so?"

The Alcalde's mouth twitched, but finally extended in an unctuous grin. After all, the priest was a descendant of the famous Don Ignacio, and—who knew?—he might have resources of which the Alcalde little dreamed.

"Cierto, Padre!" he cried, rising to depart. "And we will yet uncover La Libertad! You guarantee Rosendo's debt? *Bien*, he shall have the supplies. But I think he should take another man with him. Lázaro might do, no?"

It was a gracious and unlooked for condescension.

"Send Lázaro to me, Don Mario," said José. "We will find use for him, I think."

And thus Rosendo was enabled to depart a third time to the solitudes of Guamocó.

CHAPTER 14

WITH Rosendo again on the trail, José and Carmen bent once more to their work. Within a few days the grateful Lázaro was sent to Rosendo's *hacienda*, biding the time when the priest should have a larger commission to bestow upon him. With the advent of the dry season, peace settled over the sequestered town, while its artless folk drowsed

away the long, hot days and danced at night in the silvery moonlight to the twang of the guitar and the drone of the amorous canzonet. José was deeply grateful for these days of unbroken quiet, and for the opportunity they afforded him to probe the child's thought and develop his own. Day after day he taught her. Night after night he visited the members of his little parish, getting better acquainted with them, administering to their simple needs, talking to them in the church edifice on the marvels of the outside world, and then returning to his little cottage to prepare by the feeble rays of his flickering candle Carmen's lessons for the following day. He had no texts, save the battered little arithmetic; and even that was abandoned as soon as Carmen had mastered the decimal system. Thereafter he wrote out each lesson for her, carefully wording it that it might contain nothing to shock her acute sense of the allness of God, and omitting from the vocabulary every reference to evil, to failure, disaster, sin and death. In mathematics he was sure of his ground, for there he dealt wholly with the metaphysical. But history caused him many an hour of perplexity in his efforts to purge it of the dross of human thought. If Carmen were some day to go out into the world she *must* know the story of its past. And yet, as José faced her in the classroom and looked down into her unfathomable eyes, in whose liquid depths there seemed to dwell a soul of unexampled purity, he could not bring himself even to mention the sordid events in the development of the human race which manifested the darker elements of the carnal mind. Perhaps, after all, she might never go out into the world. He had not the faintest idea how such a thing could be accomplished. And so under his tutelage the child grew to know a world of naught but brightness and beauty, where love and happiness dwelt ever with men, and wicked thoughts were seen as powerless and transient, harmless to the one who knew God to be "everywhere." The man taught the child with the sad remembrance of his own seminary training always before him, and with a desire, amounting almost to frenzy, to keep from her every limiting influence and benumbing belief of the carnal mind.

The decimal system mastered, Carmen was inducted into the elements of algebra.

"How funny," she exclaimed, laughing, "to use letters for numbers!"

"They are only general symbols, little one," he explained. "Symbols are signs, or things that stand for other things."

Then came suddenly into his mind how the great Apostle Paul taught that the things we see, or think we see, are themselves but symbols, reflections as from a mirror, and how we

must make them out as best we can for the present, knowing that, in due season, we shall see the realities for which these things stand to the human mind. He knew that back of the mathematical symbols stood the eternal, unvarying, indestructible principles which govern their use. And he had begun to see that back of the symbols, the phenomena, of human existence stands the great principle—infinite God—the eternal mind. In the realm of mathematics the principles are omnipotent for the solution of problems—omnipotent in the hands of the one who understands and uses them aright. And is not God the omnipotent principle to the one who understands and uses Him aright in the solving of life's intricate problems?

"They are so easy when you know how, Padre dear," said Carmen, referring to her tasks.

"But there will be harder ones, *chiquita.*"

"Yes, Padre. But then I shall know more about the rules that you call principles."

She took up each problem with confidence. José watched her eagerly. "You do not know what the answer will be, *chiquita,*" he ventured.

"No, Padre dear. But I don't care. If I use the rule in the right way I shall get the correct answer, shall I not? Look!" she cried joyfully, as she held up her paper with the completed solution of a problem.

"But how do you know that it is correct?" he queried.

"Why—well, we can prove it—can't we?" She looked up at him questioningly. Then she bent again over her task and worked assiduously for some moments in silence.

"There! I worked it back again to the starting point. And it is right."

"And in proving it, little one, you have proved the principle and established its correctness. Is it not so, *chiquita?*"

"Yes, Padre, it shows that the rule is right."

The child lapsed into silence, while José, as was becoming his wont, awaited the result of her meditation. Then:

"Padre dear, there are rules for arithmetic, and algebra, and —and for everything, are there not?"

"Yes, child, for music, for art, for everything. We can do nothing correctly without using principles."

"And, Padre, there are principles that tell us how to live?" she queried.

"What is your opinion on that point, *queridita?*"

"Just *one* principle, I guess, Padre dear," she finally ventured, after a pause.

"And that, little one?"

"Just God."

"And God is—" José began, then hesitated. The Apostle John had dwelt with the Master. What had he urged so often upon the dull ears of his timid followers?

The child looked up at the priest with a smile whose tenderness dissolved the rising clouds of doubt.

"And God is—love," he finished softly.

"That's it, Padre!" The child clapped her little hands and laughed aloud.

Love! Jesus had said, "I and my Father are one." Having seen him, the world has seen the Father. But Jesus was the highest manifestation of love that tired humanity has ever known. "Love God!" he had cried in tones that have echoed through the centuries. "Love thy neighbor!" Aye, love everything, everybody! Apply the Principle of principles, Love, to every task, every problem, every situation, every condition! For what is the Christ-principle but Love? All things are possible to him who loves, for Love casteth out fear, the root of every discord. Men ask why God remains hidden from them, why their understanding of Him is dim. They forget that God is Love. They forget that to know Him they must first love their fellow-men. And so the world goes sorrowfully on, hating, cheating, grasping, abusing; still wondering dully why men droop and stumble, why they consume with disease, and, with the despairing conviction that God is unknowable, sinking at last into oblivion.

José, if he knew aught, knew that Carmen greatly loved—loved all things deeply and tenderly as reflections of her immanent God. She had loved the hideous monster that had crept toward her as she sat unguarded on the lake's rim. Unguarded? Not so, for the arms of Love were there about her. She had loved God—good—with unshaken fealty when Rosendo lay stricken. She had known that Love could not manifest in death when he himself had been dragged from the lake that burning afternoon a few weeks before.

"God is the rule, isn't He, Padre dear?" The child's unexampled eyes glowed like burning coals. "And we can prove Him, too," she continued confidently.

Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Prove Him, O man, that He is Love, and that Love, casting out hate and fear, solves life's every problem! But first—*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house.* Bring your whole confidence, your trust, your knowledge of the allness of good, and the nothingness of evil. Bring, too, your every earthly hope, every mad ambition,

every corroding fear, and carnal belief; lay them down at the doorway of mine storehouse, and behold their nothingness!

As Carmen approached her simple algebraic problems José saw the working of a rule infinite in its adaptation. She knew not what the answers should be, yet she took up each problem with supreme confidence, knowing that she possessed and rightly understood the rule for correctly solving it. She knew that speculation regarding the probable results was an idle waste of time. And she likewise knew instinctively that fear of inability to solve them would paralyze her efforts and insure defeat at the outset.

Nor could she force solutions to correspond to what she might think they ought to be—as mankind attempt to force the solving of their life problems to correspond to human views. She was glad to work out her problems in the only way they could be solved. Love, humility, obedience, enabled her to understand and correctly apply the principle to her tasks. The results were invariable—harmony and exceeding joy.

José had learned another lesson. Again that little hand had softly swept his harp of life. And again he breathed in unison with its vibrating chords a deep "Thank God!"

"Padre dear." Carmen looked up from a brown study. "What does zero really mean?"

"It stands for nothing, child," the priest made reply, wondering what was to follow this introduction.

"And the minus sign in algebra is different from the one in arithmetic. What does it mean?"

"Less than nothing."

"But, Padre, if God is all, how can you say there is nothing, or less than nothing?"

The priest had his answer ready. "They are only human ways of thinking, *chiquita*. The plus sign always represents something positive; the minus, something negative. The one is the opposite of the other."

"Is there an opposite to everything, Padre?"

The priest hesitated. Then:

"No, *chiquita*—not a *real* opposite. But," he added hastily, "we may suppose an opposite to everything."

A moment's pause ensued. "That is what makes people sick and unhappy, isn't it, Padre?"

"What, child?" in unfeigned surprise.

"Supposing an opposite to God. Supposing that there can be nothing, when He is everywhere. Doesn't all trouble come from just supposing things that are not so?"

Whence came such questions to the mind of this child? And why did they invariably lead to astonishing deductions in

his own? Why did he often give a great start as it dawned again upon him that he was not talking to one of mature age, but to a babe?

He tore a strip from the paper in his hand. Relatively the paper had lost in size and quantity, and there was a distinct separation. Absolutely, such a thing was an impossibility. The plus was always positive and real; the minus was always relative, and stood for unreality. And so it was throughout the entire realm of thought. *Every real thing has its suppositional opposite.* The difficulty is that the human mind, through long ages of usage, has come to regard the opposite as just as real as the thing itself. The opposite of love is hate; of health, disease; of good, evil; of the real, the counterfeit. God is positive—Truth. His opposite, the negative, is supposition. Oh, stupid, blundering, dull-eared humanity, not to have realized that this was just what Jesus said when he defined evil as the lie about God! No wonder the prophet proclaimed salvation to be righteousness, right thinking! But would gross humanity have understood the Master better if he had defined it this way? No, they would have stoned him on the spot!

José knew that when both he and Rosendo lay sick unto death Carmen's thought had been positive, while theirs had been of the opposite sign. Was her pure thought stronger than their disbelief? Evidently so. Was this the case with Jesus? And with the prophets before him, whom the world laughed to scorn? The inference from Scripture is plain. What, then, is the overcoming of evil but the driving out of entrenched human beliefs?

Again José came back to the thought of Principle. Confucius had said that heaven was principle. And heaven is harmony. But had evil any principle? Mankind are accustomed to speak lightly and knowingly of their "principles." But in their search for the Philosopher's Stone they have overlooked the Principle which the Master used to effect his mighty works—"that Mind which was in Christ Jesus." The Principle of Jesus was God. And, again, God is Love.

The word evil is a comprehensive term, including errors of every sort. And yet, in the world's huge category of evils is there a single one that stands upon a definite principle? José had to admit to himself that there was not. Errors in mathematics result from ignorance of principles, or from their misapplication. But are the errors real and permanent?

"Padre, when I make a mistake, and then go back and do the problem over and get it right, what becomes of the mistake?"

José burst out laughing at the tremendous question. Carmen joined in heartily.

"But, Padre," she pursued, "there are rules for solving problems; but there isn't any rule or principle for making mistakes, is there?"

"Surely not, child!" José replied.

"And if I always knew the truth about things, I couldn't make mistakes, could I?"

"No."

José waited for her further comments. They came after a brief meditation.

"Well, then, God doesn't know anything about mistakes—does He?"

"No, *chiquita.*"

"And He knows everything."

"Yes."

"Then, Padre dear, nobody can know anything about mistakes. People just think they can—don't they?"

José thought hard for a few moments. "*Chiquita,* can you know that two and two are seven?"

"Why, Padre dear, how funny!"

"Yes—it does seem strange—now. And yet, I used to think I could know things just as absurd."

"Why, what was that, Padre?"

"I thought, *chiquita,* that I could know evil—something that God does not and can not know."

"But—could you, Padre?"

"No, child. It is absolutely impossible to know—to really *know*—error of any sort."

"If we knew it, Padre, it would have a rule; or as you say, a principle, no?"

"Exactly, child."

"And, since God is everywhere, He would have to be its principle."

"Just the point. Now take another of the problems, *chiquita,* and work on it while I think about these things," he said, assigning another of the simple tasks to the child.

For an idea was running through the man's thought, and he had traced it back to the explorer in Cartagena. Reason and logic supported the thought of God as mind; of the creation as the unfolding of this mind's ideas; and of man as the greatest idea of God. It also seemed to show that the physical senses afforded no testimony at all, and that human beings saw, heard and felt only in thought, in belief. On this basis everything reduced to a mental plane, and man became a mentality. But what sort of mentality was that which José saw all about him in sinful, sick and dying humanity? The human man is demonstrably mortal—and he is a sort of mind—ah, yes, that

was it! The explorer had said that up in that great country north there were those who referred to this sort of mentality as "mortal mind." José thought it an excellent term. For, if the mortal man is a mind at all, he assuredly is a *mortal* mind.

And the mortal mind is the opposite of that mind which is the eternal God. But God can have no real opposite. Any so-called opposite to Him must be a supposition—or, as Jesus defined it, the lie about Him. This lie seems to counterfeit the eternal mind that is God. It seems to pose as a creative principle, and to simulate the powers and attributes of God himself. It assumes to create its universe of matter, the direct opposite of the spiritual universe. And, likewise, it assumes to create its man, its own idea of itself, and hence the direct opposite of the real man, the divine idea of God, made in His own image and likeness.

José rose and went to the doorway. "Surely," he murmured low, "the material personality, called man, which sins, suffers and dies, is not real man, but his counterfeit, a creation of God's opposite, the so-called mortal mind. It must be a part of the lie about God, the 'mist' that went up from the ground and watered the whole face of the earth, leaving the veil of supposition which obscures God from human sight. It is this sort of man and this sort of universe that I have always seen about me, and that the world refers to as human beings, or mortals, and the physical universe. And yet I have been looking only at my false thoughts of man."

At that moment he caught sight of Juan running toward him from the lake. The lad had just returned from Bodega Central.

"Padre," he exclaimed breathlessly, "there is war in the country again! The revolution has broken out, and they are fighting all along the river!"

José turned into the house and clasped Carmen in his arms.

CHAPTER 15

JUAN'S startling announcement linked José again with a fading past. Standing with his arm about Carmen, while the child looked up wonderingly at her grimly silent protector, the priest seemed to have fallen with dizzy precipitation from some spiritual height into a familiar material world of men and events. Into his chastened mentality there now rushed a rabble rout of suggestions, throwing into wild confusion the orderly forces of mind which he was striving to marshal to meet

the situation. He recalled, for the first time in his new environment, the significant conversation of Don Jorge and the priest Diego, in Banco. He saw again the dark clouds that were lowering above the unhappy country when he left Cartagena. Had they at last broken? And would carnal lust and rapine again drench fair Colombia with the blood of her misguided sons? Were the disturbance only a local uprising, headed by a coterie of selfish politicians, it would produce but a passing ripple. Colombia had witnessed many such, and had, by a judicious redistribution of public offices, generally met the crises with little difficulty. On the other hand, if the disorder drew its stimulus from the deep-seated, swelling sentiment of protest against the continued affiliation of Church and State, then what might not ensue before reason would again lay her restraining hand upon the rent nation! For—strange anomaly—no strife is so venomous, no wars so bloody, no issues so steeped in deadliest hatred, as those which break forth in the name of the humble Christ.

A buzzing concourse was gathering in the *plaza* before the church. Leaving Carmen in charge of Doña Maria, José mingled with the excited people. Juan had brought no definite information, other than that already imparted to José, but his elastic Latin imagination had supplied all lacking essentials, and now, with much gesticulation and rolling of eyes, with frequent alternations of shrill chatter and dignified pomp of phrase, he was portraying in a *mélange* of picturesque and poetic Spanish the supposed happenings along the great river.

José forced the lad gently aside and addressed the thoroughly excited people himself, assuring them that no reliable news was as yet at hand, and bidding them assemble in the church after the evening meal, where he would advise with them regarding their future course. He then sought the Alcalde, and drew him into his store, first closing the door against the excited multitude.

"*Bien, Señor Padre,* what are you going to do?" The Alcalde was atremble with insuppressible excitement.

"Don Mario, we must protect Simití," replied the priest, with a show of calm which he did not possess.

"*Caramba,* but not a man will stay! They will run to the hills! The *guerrillas* will come, and Simití will be burned to the ground!"

"Will you stay—with me?"

"*Na,* and be hacked by the *machetes* of the *guerrillas,* or lassoed by government soldiers and dragged off to the war?" The official mopped the damp from his purple brow.

"*Caramba!*" he went on. "But the Antioquanians will come

down the Simití trail from Remedios and butcher every one they meet! They hate us Simitanians, since we whipped them in the revolution of seventy-six! And—*Diablo!* if we stay here and beat them back, then the federal troops will come with their ropes and chains and force us away to fight on their side! *Nombre de Dios!* I am for the mountains—*pronto!*"

José's own fear mounted by leaps. And yet, in the welter of conflicting thought two objects stood out above the rest—Carmen and Rosendo. The latter was on the trail, somewhere. Would he fall afoul of the bandits who find in these revolutions their opportunities for plunder and bloodshed? As for Carmen—the priest's apprehensions were piling mountain-high. He had quickly forgotten his recent theories regarding the nature of God and man. He had been swept by the force of ill tidings clean off the lofty spiritual plane up to which he had struggled during the past weeks. Again he was befouled in the mire of material fears and corroding speculations as to the probable manifestations of evil, real and immanent. Don Mario was right. He must take the child and fly at once. He would go to Doña Maria immediately and bid her prepare for the journey.

"You had best go to Don Nicolás," replied Doña Maria, when the priest had voiced his fears to her. "He lives in Boque, and has a *hacienda* somewhere up that river. He will send you there in his canoe."

"And Boque is—?"

"Three hours from Simití, across the shales. You must start with the dawn, or the heat will overtake you before you arrive."

"Then make yourself ready, Doña Maria," said José in relief, "and we will set out in the morning."

"Padre, I will stay here," the woman quietly replied.

"Stay here!" ejaculated the priest. "Impossible! But why?"

"There will be many women too old to leave the town, Padre. I will stay to help them if trouble comes. And I would not go without Rosendo."

Shame fell upon the priest like a blanket. He, the *Cura*, was deserting his charge! And this quiet, dignified woman had shown herself stronger than the man of God! He turned to the door. Carmen was just entering. He took the child by the hand and led her to his own cottage.

"Carmen," he said, as she stood expectantly before him, "we—there is trouble in the country—that is, men are fighting and killing down on the river—and they may come here. We must—I mean, I think it best for us to go away from Simití for a while." The priest's eyes fell before the perplexed gaze of the girl.

"Go away?" she repeated slowly. "But, Padre—why?"

"The soldiers might come—wicked men might come and harm you, *chiquita!*"

The child seemed not to comprehend. "Is it that you think they will, Padre?" she at length spoke.

"I fear so, little one," he made reply.

"But—why should they?"

"Because they want to steal and kill," he returned sadly.

"They can't, Padre—they can't!" the girl said quickly. "You told me that people see only their thoughts, you know. They only think they want to steal—and they don't think right—"

"But," he interrupted bitterly, "that doesn't keep them from coming here just the same and—and—" He checked his words, as a faint memory of his recent talks with the girl glowed momentarily in his seething brain.

"But we can keep them from coming here, Padre—can't we?"

"How, child?"

"By thinking right ourselves, Padre—you said so, days ago —don't you remember?" The girl came to the frightened man and put her little arm about his neck. It was an action that had become habitual with her. "Padre dear, you read me something from your Bible just yesterday. It was about God, and He said, 'I am that which was, and is, and is to come.' Don't you remember? But, Padre dear, if He is that which is to come, how can anything bad come?"

O, ye of little faith! Could ye not watch one hour with me —the Christ-principle? Must ye ever flee when the ghost of evil stalks before you with his gross assumptions?

Yes, José remembered. But he had said those things to her and evolved those beautiful theories in a time of peace. Now his feeble faith was flying in panic before the demon of unbelief, which had been aroused by sudden fear.

The villagers were gathering before his door like frightened sheep. They sought counsel, protection, from him, the unfaithful shepherd. Could he not, for their sakes, tear himself loose from bondage to his own deeply rooted beliefs, and launch out into his true orbit about God? Was life, happiness, all, at the disposal of physical sense? Did he not love these people? And could not his love for them cast out his fear? If the test had come, would he meet it, calmly, even alone with his God, if need be?—or would he basely flee? He was not alone. Carmen stood by him. She had no part in his cowardice. But Carmen—she was only a child, immature, inexperienced in the ways of the world! True. Yet the great God himself had caused His prophets to see that "a little child shall

lead them." And surely Carmen was now leading in fearlessness and calm trust, in the face of impending evil.

José rose from his chair and threw back his shoulders. He stepped quickly to the door. "My children," he said gently, holding out his arms over them. "Be not afraid. I shall not leave Simití, but remain here to help and protect all who will stay with me. If the *guerrillas* or soldiers come we will meet them here, where we shall be protecting our loved ones and our homes. Come to the church to-night, and there we will discuss plans. Go now, and remember that your *Cura* has said that there shall no harm befall you."

Did he believe his own words? He wondered.

The people dispersed; Carmen was called by Doña Maria; and José dropped down upon his bed to strive again to clear his mind of the foul brood which had swept so suddenly into it, and to prepare for the evening meeting.

Late that night, as he crossed the road from the church to his little home, his pulse beat rapidly under the stimulus of real joy. He had conquered his own and the fears of the Alcalde, and that official had at length promised to stay and support him. The people's fears of impressment into military service had been calmly met and assuaged, though José had yielded to their wish to form a company of militia; and had even agreed to drill them, as he had seen the troops of Europe drilled and prepared for conflict. There were neither guns nor ammunition in the town, but they could drill with their *machetes*—for, he repeated to himself, this was but a concession, an expedient, to keep the men occupied and their minds stimulated by his own show of courage and preparedness. It was decided to send Lázaro Ortiz at once into the Guamocó district, to find and warn Rosendo; while Juan was to go to Bodega Central for whatever news he might gather, and to return with immediate warning, should danger threaten their town. Similar instruction was to be sent to Escolastico, at Badillo. Within a few days a runner should be despatched over the Guamocó trail, to spread the information as judiciously as possible that the people of Simití were armed and on the alert to meet any incursion from *guerrilla* bands. The ripple of excitement quickly died away. The priest would now strive mightily to keep his own thought clear and his courage alive, to sustain his people in whatever experience might befall them.

Quiet reigned in the little village the next morning, and its people went about their familiar duties with but a passing thought of the events of the preceding day. The Alcalde called at the parish house early for further instructions in regard to

the proposed company of militia. The priest decided to drill his men twice a day, at the rising and setting of the sun. Carmen's lessons were then resumed, and soon José was again laboring conscientiously to imbibe the spirit of calm trust which dwelt in this young girl.

The Master's keynote before every threatening evil was, "Be not afraid." Carmen's life-motif was, *"God is everywhere."* José strove to see that the Christ-principle was eternal, and as available to mankind now as when the great Exemplar propounded it to the dull ears of his followers. But men must learn how to use it. When they have done this, Christianity will be as scientific and demonstrable to mankind as is now the science of mathematics. A rule, though understood, is utterly ineffective if not applied. Yet, how to apply the Christ-principle? is the question convulsing a world to-day.

God, the infinite creative mind, *is* that principle. Jesus showed clearly—so clearly that the wonder is men could have missed the mark so completely—that the great principle becomes available only when men empty their minds of pride, selfishness, ignorance, and human will, and put in their place love, humility and truth. This step taken, there will flow into the human consciousness the qualities of God himself, giving powers that mortals believe utterly impossible to them. But hatred must go; self-love, too; carnal ambition must go; and fear—the cornerstone of every towering structure of mortal misery—must be utterly cast out by an understanding of the allness of the Mind that framed the spiritual universe.

José, looking at Carmen as she sat before him, tried to know that love was the salvation, the righteousness, right-thinking, by which alone the sons of men could be redeemed. The world would give such utterance the lie, he knew. To love an enemy is weakness! The sons of earth must be warriors, and valiantly fight! Alas! the tired old world has fought for ages untold, and gained—nothing. Did Jesus fight? Not as the world. He had a better way. He loved his enemies with a love that understood the allness of God, and the consequent nothingness of the human concept. Knowing the concept of man as mortal to be an illusion, Jesus then knew that he had no enemies.

The work-day closed, and Carmen was about to leave. A shadow fell across the open doorway. José looked up. A man, dressed in clerical garb, stood looking in, his eyes fixed upon Carmen. José's heart stopped, and he sat as one stunned. The man was Padre Diego Polo.

"Ah, brother in Christ!" the newcomer cried, advancing with outstretched hands. "Well met, indeed! I ached to think I might not find you here! But—*Caramba!* can this be my

little Carmen, from whom I tore myself in tears four years ago and more? *Diablo!* but she has grown to be a charming *señorita* already." He bent over and kissed the child loudly upon each cheek.

José with difficulty restrained himself from pouncing upon the man as he watched him pass his fat hands over the girl's bare arms and feast his lecherous eyes upon her round figure and plump limbs. The child shrank under the withering touch. Freeing herself, she ran from the room, followed by a taunting laugh from Diego.

"Caramba!" he exclaimed, sinking into the chair vacated by the girl. "But I had the devil's own trouble getting here! And I find everything quiet as a funeral in this sink of a town, just as if hell were not spewing fire down on the river! *Dios!* But give me a bit of rum, *amigo.* My spirits droop like the torn wing of a heron."

José slowly found his voice. "I have no rum. I regret exceedingly, friend. But doubtless the Alcalde can supply you. Have you seen him?"

"Hombre! With what do you quench your thirst?" ejaculated the disappointed priest. "Lake water?" Then he added with a fatuous grin:

"No, I have not yet honored the Alcalde with a call. Anxious care drove me straight from the boat to you; for with you, a brother priest, I knew I would find hospitality and protection."

José sat speechless. After a few moments, during which he fanned himself vigorously with his black felt hat, Diego continued volubly:

"You are consumed to know what brings me here, eh? *Bien,* I will anticipate your questions. The country is on fire around Banco. And—you know they do not love priests down that way—well, I saw that it had come around to my move. I therefore got out—quickly. H'm!

"But," he continued, "luckily I had screwed plenty of Masses out of the Banco sheep this past year, and my treasure box was comfortably full. *Bueno,* I hired a canoe and a couple of strapping *peones,* who brought me by night, and by damnably slow degrees, up the river to Bodega Central. As luck would have it, I chanced to be there the day Juan arrived from Simiti. So I straightway caused inquiry to be made of him respecting the present whereabouts of our esteemed friend, Don Rosendo. Learning that my worthy brother was prospecting for La Libertad, it occurred to me that this decaying town might afford me the asylum I needed until I could make the necessary preparations to get up into the mountains. *Caramba!* but I

shall not stay where a stray bullet or a badly directed *machete* may terminate my noble life-aspirations!"

José groaned inwardly. "But, how dared you come to Simití?" he exclaimed. "You were once forced to leave this town—!"

"Assuredly, *amigo,*" Diego replied with great coolness. "And I would not risk my tender skin again had I not believed that you were here to shield me. My only safety lies in making the mountains. Their most accessible point is by way of Simití. From here I can go to the San Lucas country; eventually get back to the Guamocó trail; and ultimately land in Remedios, or some other town farther south, where the anticlerical sentiment is not so cursedly strong. I have money and two negro boys. The boat I shall have to leave here in your care. *Bien,* learning that Rosendo, my principal annoyance and obstruction, was absent, and that you, my friend, were here, I decided to brave the wrath of the simple denizens of this hole, and spend a day or two as guest of yourself and my good friend, the Alcalde, before journeying farther. Thus you have it all, *in parvo.* But, *Dios y diablo!* that trip up the river has nearly done for me! We traveled by night and hid in the brush by day, where millions of gnats and mosquitoes literally devoured me! *Caramba!* and you so inhospitable as to have no rum!"

The garrulous priest paused for breath. Then he resumed:

"A voluptuous little wench, that Carmen! Keeping her for yourself, eh? But you will have to give her up. Belongs to the Church, you know. But don't let our worthy Don Wenceslas hear of her good looks, for he'd pop her into a convent *presto!* And later he—*Bien,* you had better get rid of her before she makes you trouble. I'll take her off your hands myself, even though I shall be traveling for the next few months. But, say," changing the subject abruptly, "Don Wenceslas sprung his trap too soon, eh?"

"I don't follow you," said José, consuming with indignation over the priest's coarse talk.

"*Diablo!* he pulls a revolution before it is ripe. Is anything more absurd! It begins as he intended, anticlerical; and so it will run for a while. But after that—*Bien,* you will see it reverse itself and turn solely political, with the present Government on top at the last, and the end a matter of less than six weeks."

"Do you think so?" asked José, eagerly grasping at a new hope.

"I know it!" ejaculated Diego. *"Hombre!* But I have been too close to matters religious and political in this country all my life not to know that Don Wenceslas has this time com-

mitted the blunder of being a bit too eager. Had he waited a few months longer, and then pulled the string—*Dios y diablo!* there would have been such a fracas as to turn the *Cordilleras* bottom up! Now all that is set back for years—*Quien sabe?*"

"But," queried the puzzled José, "how could Wenceslas, a priest, profit by an anticlerical war?"

"Caramba, amigo! But the good Wenceslas is priest only in name! He is a politician, bred to the game. He lays his plans with the anticlericals, knowing full well that Church and State can not be separated in this land of mutton-headed *peones. Bueno,* the clever man precipitates a revolution that can have but one result, the closer union of Rome and the Colombian Government. And for this he receives the direction of the See of Cartagena and the disposition of the rich revenues from the mines and *fincas* of his diocese. Do you get me?"

"And, *amigo,* how long will this disturbance continue?" said José, speaking earnestly.

"I have told you, a few weeks at the most," replied Diego with a show of petulance. "But, just the same, as agent of your friend Wenceslas, I have been a mite too active along the river, especially in the town of Banco, to find safety anywhere within the pale of civilization until this little fracas blows over. This one being an abortion, the next revolution can come only after several years of most painstaking preparation. But, mark me, *amigo,* that one will not miscarry, nor will it be less than a scourge of the Lord!"

Despite the sordidness of the man, José was profoundly grateful to him for this information. And there could be no doubt of its authenticity, coming as it did from a tool of Wenceslas himself. José became cheerful, even animated.

"Good, then! Now when do you expect to set out for San Lucas?" he asked. "Rosendo may return any day."

"Diablo! Then I must be off at once!"

"To-morrow?" suggested José eagerly.

"Caramba, hermano! Why so desirous of my departure? To be sure, to-morrow, if possible. But I must have a chat with our good friend, the Alcalde. So do me the inexpressible favor to accompany me to his door, and there leave me. My *peones* are down at the boat, and I would rather not face the people of Simití alone."

"Gladly," assented José.

The man rose to depart. At that moment Doña Maria appeared at the door bearing a tray with José's supper. She stopped short as she recognized Diego.

"Ah, Señora Doña Maria!" exclaimed Diego, bowing low. "I kiss your hand."

The woman looked inquiringly from Diego to José. Without a word she set the tray on the table and quickly departed.

"H'm, *amigo,* I think it well to visit the Alcalde at once," murmured Diego. "I regret that I bring the amiable señora no greeting from her charming daughter. *Ay de mi!"* he sighed, picking up his hat. "The conventions of this world are so narrow!"

Don Mario exclaimed loudly when he beheld the familiar figure of Padre Diego. Recovering from his astonishment he broke into a loud guffaw and clapped the grinning priest heartily upon the back.

"Caramba, man! But I admire you at last! I can forgive all your wickedness at sight of such nerve! Ramona!" calling to his daughter in the *patio.* "That last *garrafon* and some glasses! But enter, enter, señores! Why stand you there? My poor hovel is yours!" stepping aside and ceremoniously waving them in.

"Our friend finds that his supper awaits him," said Diego, laying a hand patronizingly upon José's arm. "But I will eat with you, my good Don Mario, and occupy a *petate* on your floor to-night. *Conque,* until later, Don José," waving a polite dismissal to the latter. "If not to-night, then in the morning *temprano."*

The audacity of the man nettled José. He would have liked to be present during the interview between the Alcalde and this cunning religio-political agent, for he knew that the weak-kneed Don Mario would be putty in his oily hands. However, Diego had shown him that he was not wanted. And there was nothing to do but nurse his temper and await events.

But, whatever deplorable results the visit of Diego might entail, he had at least brought present comfort to José in his report of the militant uprising now in progress, and the latter would sleep this night without the torment of dread apprehension.

The next morning Diego entered the parish house just as master and pupil were beginning their day's work.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "our parochial school is quite discriminating! No? One pupil! *Bien,* are there not enough children in the town to warrant a larger school, and with a Sister in charge? I will report the matter to the good Bishop."

José's wrath leaped into flame. "There is a school here, as you know, *amigo,* with a competent master," he replied with what calmness he could muster.

It was perhaps a hasty and unfortunate remark, for José knew he had been jealously selfish with Carmen.

"Caramba, yes!" retorted Diego. "A private school, to

which the stubborn beasts that live in this sink will not send their brats! There must be a parochial school in Simití, supported by the people! Oh, don't worry; there is gold enough here, buried in *patios* and under these innocent-looking mud walls, to support the Pope for a decade—and that," he chuckled, "is no small sum!"

His eyes roved over Carmen and he began a mental appraisement of the girl. "*Caramba!*" muttering half to himself, after he had feasted his sight upon her for some moments, "but she is large for her age—and, *Dios y diablo!* a ravishing beauty!"

He stood for a while wrapped in thought. Then an idea seemed to filter through his cunning brain. His coarse, unmoral face brightened, and his thick lips parted in an evil smile.

"Come here, little one," he said patronizingly, extending his arms to the child. "Come, give your good *Padre* his morning kiss."

The girl shrank back in her chair and looked appealingly at José.

"No? Then I must come and steal it; and when you confess to good Padre José you may tell him it was all my fault."

He started toward her. A look of horror came into the child's face and she sprang from her seat. José swiftly rose. He seized Diego by the shoulder and whirled him quickly about. His face was menacing and his frame trembled.

"One moment, friend!" The voice was low, tense, and deliberate. "If you lay a hand on that child I will strike you dead at my feet!"

Diego recoiled. *Cielo!* was this the timid sheep that had stopped for a moment in Banco on its way to the slaughter? But there was no mistaking the spirit manifested now in that voice and attitude.

"Why, *amigo!*" he exclaimed, a foolish grin splitting his ugly features. "Your little joke startled me!"

José motioned Carmen to leave.

"Be seated, Don Diego. It would be well to understand each other more thoroughly."

Had José gone too far? He wondered. Heaven knew, he could not afford to make enemies, especially at this juncture! But he had not misread the thought coursing through the foul mind of Diego. And yet, violence now might ruin both the child and himself. He must be wiser.

"I—I was perhaps a little hasty, *amigo*," he began in gentler tones. "But, as you see, I have been quite wrought up of late—the news of the revolution, and—in these past months there have been many things to cause me worry. I—"

"Say no more, good friend," interrupted the oily Diego, his beady eyes twinkling. "But you will not wonder it struck me odd that a father should not be permitted to embrace his own daughter."

Dead silence, heavy and stifling, fell upon José. Slowly his throat filled, and his ears began to throb. Diego sat before him, smiling and twirling his fat thumbs. He looked like the images of Chinese gods José had seen in foreign lands.

Then the tortured man forced a laugh. Of course, the strain of yesterday had been too much for him! His overwrought mind had read into words and events meanings which they had not been meant to convey.

"True, *amigo,*" he managed to say, striving to steady his voice. "But we spiritual Fathers should not forget—"

Diego laughed egregiously. *"Caramba,* man! Let us get to the meat in the nut. Why do you think I am in Simití, braving the wrath of Rosendo and others? Why have I left my comfortable quarters in Banco, to undertake a journey, long and hazardous, to this godless hole?"

He paused, apparently enjoying the suffering he saw depicted upon José's countenance.

"I will tell you," he resumed. "But you will keep my confidence, no? We are brother priests, and must hold together. You protect me in this, and I return the favor in a like indiscretion. *Bien,* I explain: I am here partly because of the revolution, as I told you yesterday, and partly, as I did not tell you, to see my little girl, my daughter, Carmen—

"Caramba, man!" he cried, bounding to his feet, as he saw José slowly rise before him. "Listen! It is God's truth! Sit down! Sit down!"

José dropped back into his chair like a withered leaf in the lull of a winter's wind.

"Dios y diablo, but it rends me to make this confession, *amigo!* And yet, I look to you for support! The girl, Carmen —*I am her father!*"

Diego paced dramatically up and down before the scarce hearing José and unfolded his story in a quick, jerky voice, with many a gesture and much rolling of his bright eyes.

"Her mother was a Spanish woman of high degree. We met in Bogotá. My vows prevented me from marrying her, else I should have done so. *Caramba,* but I loved her! *Bien,* I was called to Cartagena. She feared, in her delicate state, that I was deserting her. She tried to follow me, and at Badillo was put off the boat. There, poor child, she passed away in grief, leaving her babe. May she rest forever on the bosom of the blessed Virgin!" Diego bowed reverently and crossed himself.

"Then I lost all trace of her. My diligent inquiries revealed nothing. Two years later I was assigned to the parish of Simití. Here I saw the little locket which I had given her, and knew that Carmen was my child. Ah, *Dios!* what a revelation to a breaking heart! But I could not openly acknowledge her, for I was already in disgrace, as you know. And, once down, it is easy to sink still further. I confess, I was indiscreet here. I was forced to fly. Rosendo's daughter followed me, despite my protests. I was assigned to Banco. *Bien,* time passed, and you came. I had hoped you would take the little Carmen under your protection. God, how I grieved for the child! At last I determined, come what might, to see her. The revolution drove me to the mountains; and love for my girl brought me by way of Simití. And now, *amigo,* you have my confession—and you will not be hard on me? *Caramba,* I need a friend!" He sat down, and mopped his wet brow. His talk had shaken him visibly.

Again oppressive silence. José was staring with unseeing eyes out through the open doorway. A stream of sunlight poured over the dusty threshold, and myriad motes danced in the golden flood.

"Bien, amigo," Diego resumed, with more confidence. "I had not thought to reveal this, my secret, to you—nor to any one, for that matter—but just to get a peep at my little daughter, and assure my anxious heart of her welfare. But since coming here and seeing how mature she is my plans have taken more definite shape. I shall leave at daybreak to-morrow, if Don Mario can have my supplies ready on this short notice, and—will take Carmen with me."

José struggled wearily to his feet. The color had left his face, and ages seemed to bestride his bent shoulders. His voice quavered as he slowly spoke.

"Leave me now, Don Diego. It were better that we should not meet again until you depart."

"But, *amigo*—ah, I feel for you, believe me! You are attached to the child—who would not be? *Caramba,* what is this world but a cemetery of bleaching hopes! But—how can I ask it? *Amigo,* send the child to me at the house of the Alcalde. I would hold her in my arms and feel a father's joy. And bid the good Doña Maria make her ready for to-morrow's journey."

José turned to the man. An ominous calm now possessed him. "You said—the San Lucas district?"

"Quien sabe? good friend," Diego made hasty reply. "My plans seem quite altered since coming here. *Bien,* we must see. But I will leave you now. And you will send Carmen to

me at once? And bid her bring her mother's locket. *Conque, hasta luego, amigo.*"

He went to the door, and seeing his two negro *peones* loitering near, walked confidently and briskly to the house of Don Mario.

José, bewildered and benumbed, staggered into his sleeping room and sank upon the bed.

* * * * * *

"Padre—Padre dear."

Carmen stood beside the stricken priest, and her little hand crept into his.

"I watched until I saw him go, and then I came in. He has bad thoughts, hasn't he? But—Padre dear, what is it? Did he make you think bad thoughts, too? He can't, you know, if you don't want to."

She bent over him and laid her cheek against his. José stared unseeing up at the thatch roof.

"Padre dear, everything has a rule, a principle, you told me. Don't you remember? But his thoughts haven't any principle, have they? Any more than the mistakes I make in algebra. Aren't we glad we know that!"

The child kissed the suffering man and wound her arms about his neck.

"Padre dear, he couldn't say anything that could make you unhappy—he just couldn't! God is *everywhere*, and you are His child—and I am, too—and—and there just isn't anything here but God, and we are in Him. Why, Padre, we are in Him, just like the little fish in the lake! Isn't it nice to know that—to really *know* it?"

Aye, if he had really known it he would not now be stretched upon a bed of torment. Yet, Carmen knew it. And his suffering was for her. Was he not really yielding to the mesmerism of human events? Why, oh, why could he not remain superior to them? Why continually rise and fall, tossed through his brief years like a dry weed in the blast?

It was because he *would* know evil, and yield to its mesmerism. His enemies were not without, but within. How could he hope to be free until he had passed from self-consciousness to the sole consciousness of infinite good?

"Padre dear, his bad thoughts have only the minus sign, haven't they?"

Yes, and José's now carried the same symbol of nothingness. Carmen was linked to the omnipresent mind that is God; and no power, be it Diego or his superior, Wenceslas, could effect a separation.

But if Carmen was Diego's child, she must go with him.

José could no longer endure this torturing thought. He rose from the bed and sought Doña Maria.

"Señora," he pleaded, "tell me again what you know of Carmen's parents."

The good woman was surprised at the question, but could add nothing to what Rosendo had already told him. He asked to see again the locket. Alas! study it as he might, the portrait of the man was wholly indistinguishable. The sweet, sad face of the young mother looked out from its frame like a suffering Magdalen. In it he thought he saw a resemblance to Carmen. As for Diego, the child certainly did not resemble him in the least. But years of dissipation and evil doubtless had wrought their changes in his features.

He looked around for Carmen. She had disappeared. He rose and searched through the house for her. Doña Maria, busy in the kitchen, had not seen her leave. His search futile, he returned with heavy heart to his own house and sat down to think. Mechanically he opened his Bible.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. Not "if," but "when." The sharp experiences of human existence are not to be avoided. But in their very midst the Christ-principle is available to the faithful searcher and worker.

Doña Maria came with the midday meal. Carmen had not returned. José, alarmed beyond measure, prepared to set out in search of her. But at that moment one of Diego's *peones* appeared at the door with his master's request that the child be sent at once to him. At least, then, she was not in his hands; and José breathed more freely. It seemed to him that, should he see her in Diego's arms, he must certainly strangle him. He shuddered at the thought. Only a few minutes before he had threatened to kill him!

He left his food untasted. Unspeakably wearied with his incessant mental battle, he threw himself again upon his bed, and at length sank into a deep sleep.

The shadows were gathering when he awoke with a start. He heard a call from the street. Leaping from the bed, he hastened to the door, just as Rosendo, swaying beneath his pack, and accompanied by Lázaro Ortiz, rounded the corner and made toward him.

"Hola, amigo Cura!" Rosendo shouted, his face radiant. "Come and bid me welcome, and receive good news!"

At the same moment Carmen came flying toward them from the direction of the shales. José instantly divined the motive which had sent her out there. He turned his face to hide the tears which sprang to his eyes.

"Thank God!" he murmured in a choking voice. Then he hastened to his faithful ally and clasped him in his arms.

CHAPTER 16

STRUGGLING vainly with his agitation, while the good tidings which he could no longer hold fairly bubbled from his lips, Rosendo dragged the priest into the parish house and made fast the doors. Swinging his chair to the floor, he hastily unstrapped his kit and extracted a canvas bag, which he handed to José.

"Padre," he exclaimed in a loud whisper, "we have found it!"

"Found what?" the bewildered José managed to ask.

"Gold, Padre—gold! Look, the bag is full! *Hombre!* not less than forty *pesos oro*—and more up there—*quien sabe* how much! *Caramba!*"

Rosendo fell into a chair, panting with excitement. José sat down with quickening pulse and waited for the full story. It was not long coming.

"Padre—I knew we would find it—but not this way! *Hombre!* It was back of Popales. I had been washing the sands there for two days after my return. There was a town at that place, years ago. The stone foundations of the houses can still be seen. The Tiguí was rich at that point then; but it is washed out now. *Bien*, one morning I started out at daybreak to prospect Popales creek, the little stream cutting back into the hills behind the old settlement. There was a heavy mist over the whole valley, and I could not see ten feet before my face. *Bien*, I had gone up stream a long distance, perhaps several miles, without finding more than a few colors, when suddenly the mist began to clear, and there before me, only a few feet away, stood a young deer, just as dumfounded as I was."

He paused a moment for breath, laughing meanwhile at the memory of his surprise. Then he resumed.

"*Bueno*, fresh venison looked good to me, Padre, living on salt *bagre* and beans. But I had no weapon, save my *machete*. So I let drive with that, and with all my strength. The big knife struck the deer on a leg. The animal turned and started swiftly up the mountain side, with myself in pursuit. *Caramba*, that was a climb! But with his belly chasing him, a hungry man will climb anything! Through palms and ferns and high weeds, falling over rocks and tripping on ground vines we

went, clear to the top of the hill. Then the animal turned and plunged down a glen. On the descent it traveled faster, and in a few minutes had passed clean from my sight. *Caramba,* I was angry!"

He stopped to laugh again at the incident.

"The glen," he continued, "ran down for perhaps a hundred yards, and then widened into a clearing. I have been in the Popales country many times, Padre, but I had never been to the top of this mountain, nor had I ever seen this glen, which seemed to be an ancient trail. So I went on down toward the clearing. As I approached it I crossed what apparently was the bed of an ancient stream, dry now, but with many pools of water from the recent rains, which are very heavy in that region. *Bien,* I turned and followed this dry bed for a long distance, and at last came out into the open. I found myself in a circular space, surrounded by high hills, with no opening but the stream bed along which I had come. At the far end of the basin-shaped clearing the creek bed stopped abruptly; and I then knew that the water had formerly come over the cliff above in a high waterfall, but had flowed in a direction opposite to that of Popales creek, this mountain being the divide.

"*Bueno;* now for my discovery! I several times filled my *batea* with gravel from the dry bed and washed it in one of the pools. I got only a few scattered colors. But as I dug along the margin of the bed I noticed what seemed to be pieces of adobe bricks. I went on up one side of the bowl-shaped glen, and found many such pieces, and in some places stones that had served as foundations for houses at one time. So I knew that there had been a town there, long, long ago. But it must have been an Indian village, for had it been known to the Spaniards I surely would have learned of it from my parents. The ground higher up was strewn with the broken bricks. I picked up many of the pieces and examined them. Almost every one showed a color or two of gold; but not enough to pay washing the clay from which they had been made. But—and here is the end of my story—I have said that this open space was shaped like a bowl, with all sides dipping sharply to the center. It occurred to me that in the years—who knows how many?—that have passed since this town was abandoned, the heavy rains that had dissolved the mud bricks also must have washed the mud and the gold it carried down into the center of this basin, where, with great quantities of water sweeping over it every rainy season, the clay and sand would gradually wash out, leaving the gold concentrated in the center."

The old man stopped to light the thick cigar which he had rolled during his recital.

"Caramba! Padre, it was a lucky thought! I located the center of the big bowl as nearly as possible, and began to dig. I washed some of the dirt taken a foot or two below the surface. *Hombre!* it left a string of gold clear around the *batea!* I became so excited I could scarcely dig. Every *batea,* as I got deeper and deeper, yielded more and more gold! I hurried back to the Tiguí for my supplies; and then camped up there and washed the sand and clay for two weeks, until I had to come back to Simití for food. Forty *pesos oro* in fifteen days! *Caramba!* And there is more. And all concentrated from the mud bricks of that old, forgotten town in the mountains, miles back of Popales! May the Virgin bless that deer and mend its hurt leg!"

One hundred and sixty francs in shining gold flakes! And who knew how much more to be had for the digging!

"Ah, Padre," mused Rosendo, "it is wonderful how things turn out—that is, when, as the little Carmen says, you think right! I thought I'd find it—I knew it was right! And here it is! *Caramba!*"

At the mention of Carmen's name José again became troubled. Rosendo as yet did not know of Diego's presence in Simití. Should he tell him? It might lead to murder. Rosendo would learn of it soon enough; and José dared not cast a blight upon the happiness of this rare moment. He would wait.

As they sat reunited at the supper table in Rosendo's house, a constant stream of townspeople passed and repassed the door, some stopping to greet the returned prospector, others lingering to witness Rosendo's conduct when he should learn of Diego's presence in the town, although no one would tell him of it. The atmosphere was tense with suppressed excitement, and José trembled with dread. Doña Maria moved quietly about, giving no hint of the secret she carried. Carmen laughed and chatted, but did not again mention the man from whose presence she had fled to the shales that morning. Who could doubt that in the midst of the prevalent mental confusion she had gone out there *"to think"?* And having performed that duty, she had, as usual, left her problem with her immanent God.

"I will go up and settle with Don Mario this very night," Rosendo abruptly announced, as they rose from the table.

"Not yet, friend!" cried José quickly. "Lázaro has told you of the revolution; and we have many plans to consider, now that we have found gold. Come with me to the shales. We will not be interrupted there. We can slip out through the rear door, and so avoid these curious people. I have much to discuss with you."

Rosendo chuckled. "My honest debts first, *buen Cura,*" he said sturdily. And throwing back his shoulders he strutted about the room with the air of a plutocrat. With his bare feet, his soiled, flapping attire, and his swelling sense of self-importance he cut a comical figure.

"But, Rosendo—" José was at his wits' end. Then a happy thought struck him. "Why, man! I want to make you captain of the militia we are forming, and I must talk with you alone first!"

The childish egotism of the old man was instantly touched. "*Capitán! el capitán!*" he cried in glee. He slapped his chest and strode proudly around the room. "*Caramba! Capitán Don Rosendo Ariza, S!* Ha! Shall I carry a sword and wear gold braid?—But these fellows are mighty curious," he muttered, looking out through the door at the loitering townsfolk. "The shales, then, Padre! Close the front door, Carmencita."

José scarcely breathed until, skirting the shore of the lake and making a detour of the town, he and Rosendo at length reached the shale beds unnoticed.

"Rosendo, the gold deposit that you have discovered—is it safe? Could others find it?" queried José at length.

"Never, Padre! No trail leads to it. And no one would think of looking there for gold. I discovered it by the merest chance, and I left no trace of my presence. Besides, there are no gold hunters in that country, and very few people in the entire district of Guamocó."

"And how long will it take you to wash out the deposit, do you think?"

"*Quien sabe?* Padre. A year—two years—perhaps longer."

"But you cannot return to Guamocó until the revolution is over."

"*Bien,* Padre, I will remain in Simití a week or two. We may then know what to expect of the revolution."

"You are not afraid?"

"Of what? *Caramba,* no!"

José sighed. No one seemed to fear but himself.

"Rosendo, about the gold for Cartagena: how can we send it, even when peace is restored?"

"Juan might go down each month," Rosendo suggested.

"Impossible! The expense would be greater than the amount shipped. And it would not be safe. Besides, our work must be done with the utmost secrecy. No one but ourselves must know of your discovery. And no one else in Simití must know where we are sending the gold. Rosendo, it is a great problem."

"*Caramba,* yes!"

The men lapsed into profound meditation. Then:

"Rosendo, the little Carmen makes great progress."

"*Por supuesto!* I knew she would. She has a mind!"

"Have you no idea, Rosendo, who her parents might have been?"

"None whatever, Padre."

"Has it ever occurred to you, Rosendo, that, because of her deeply religious nature, possibly her father was a priest?"

"*Caramba,* no!" ejaculated Rosendo, turning upon José. "What puts that into your head, *amigo?*"

"As I have said, Rosendo," José answered, "her religious instinct."

"*Bien, Señor Padre,* you forget that priests are not religious."

"But some are, Rosendo," persisted José in a tone of protest.

"Perhaps. But those who are do not have children," was Rosendo's simple manner of settling the argument.

Its force appealed to José, and he felt a shade of relief. But, if Diego were not the father of Carmen, what motive had he for wishing to take her with him, other than to train her eventually to become his concubine? The thought maddened him. He almost decided to tell Rosendo.

"But, Padre, we came out here to talk about the militia of which I am to be captain. *Bien,* we must begin work tomorrow. *Hombre,* but the señora's eyes will stand out when she sees me marching at the head of the company!" He laughed like a pleased child.

"And now that we have gold, Padre, I must send to Cartagena for a gun. What would one cost?"

"You probably could not obtain one, Rosendo. The Government is so afraid of revolutions that it prohibits the importation of arms. But even if you could, it would cost not less than fifty *pesos oro.*"

"Fifty *pesos! Caramba!*" exclaimed the artless fellow. "Then I get no gun! But now let us name those who will form the company."

By dwelling on the pleasing theme, José managed to keep Rosendo engaged until fatigue at length drove the old man to seek his bed. The town was wrapped in darkness as they passed through its quiet streets, and the ancient Spanish lantern, hanging crazily from its moldering sconce on the corner of Don Felipe's house, threw the only light into the black mantle that lay upon the main thoroughfare.

* * * * * *

At sunrise, José was awakened by Rosendo noisily entering

his house. A glance at the old man showed that he was laboring under strong emotion.

"What sort of friendship is this," he demanded curtly, "that you keep me from learning of Diego's presence in Simiti? It was a trick you served me—and friends do not so to one another!" He stood looking darkly at the priest.

"Have you seen him, then? Good heavens, Rosendo! what have you done to him?" cried José, hastily leaving his bed.

"There, comfort yourself, Padre," replied Rosendo, a sneer curling his lips. "Your friend is safe—for the present. He and his negro rascals fled before sunrise."

"And which direction did they take?"

"Why do you ask? Would you go to them? *Bueno,* then across the lake, toward the Juncal. Don Mario stocked their boat last night, while you kept me out on the shales. *Buen arreglo, no?*"

"Yes, Rosendo," replied José gladly, "an excellent arrangement to keep you from dipping your hands in his foul blood. Why, man! is your vision so short? Have you no thought of Carmen and her future?"

"But—*Dios!* he has spread the report that he is her father! *Caramba!* For that I would tear him apart! He robbed me of one child; and now—*Caramba!* Why did you let him go?—why did you, Padre?"

Rosendo paced the floor like a caged lion, while great tears rolled down his black cheeks.

"But, Rosendo, if you had killed him—what then? Imprisonment for you, suffering for us all, and the complete wreck of our hopes. Is it worth it?"

"*Na,* Padre, but I would have escaped to Guamocó, to the gold I have discovered. There no one would have found me. And you would have kept me supplied; and I would have given you the gold I washed to care for her—"

The man sank into a chair and buried his head in his hands. "*Caramba!*" he moaned. "But he will return when I am gone —and—the Church is back of him, and they will come and steal her away—"

How childish, and yet how great he was in his wonderful love, thought José. He pitied him from the bottom of his heart; he loved him immeasurably; yet he knew the old man's judgment was unsound in this case.

"Come, Rosendo," he said gently, laying a hand upon the bent head. "This is a time when expediency bids us suffer an evil to remain for a little while, that a much greater good may follow."

He hesitated. Then—"You do not think Diego is her father?"

"A thousand devils, no!" shouted Rosendo, springing up. "He the father of that angel-child? *Cielo!* His brats would be serpents! But I am losing time—" He turned to the door.

"Rosendo!" cried the priest in fresh alarm. "Where are you going? What are you—"

"I am going after Diego! Juan and Lázaro go with me! Before sundown that devil's carcass will be buzzard meat!"

José threw himself in front of Rosendo.

"Rosendo, think of Carmen! Would you kill her, too? If you kill Diego nothing can save her from Wenceslas! Rosendo, for God's sake, listen!"

But the old man, with his huge strength, tossed the frail priest lightly aside and rushed into the street. Blind with rage, he did not see Carmen standing a short distance from the door. The child had been sent to summon him to breakfast. Unable to check his momentum, the big man crashed full into her and bore her to the ground beneath him. As she fell her head struck the sharp edge of an ancient paving stone, and she lay quite still, while the warm blood slowly trickled through her long curls.

Uttering a frightened cry, José rushed to the dazed Rosendo and got him to his feet. Then he picked up the child, and, his heart numb with fear, bore her into the house.

Clasping Carmen fiercely in his arms, José tried to aid Doña Maria in staunching the freely flowing blood. Rosendo, crazed with grief, bent over them, giving vent to moans which, despite his own fears, wrung the priest's heart with pity for the suffering old man. At length the child opened her eyes.

"Praise God!" cried Rosendo, kneeling and showering kisses upon her hands. *"Loado sea el buen Dios! Caramba! Caramba!"*

"Padre Rosendo," the girl murmured, smiling down at him, "your thoughts were driving you, just like Benjamín drives his oxen. And they were bad, or you wouldn't have knocked me over."

"Bad!" Rosendo went to the doorway and squatted down upon the dirt floor in the sunlight. "Bad!" he ejaculated. "*Caramba,* but they were murder-thoughts!"

"And they tried to make you murder me, didn't they, padre dear?" She laughed. "But it didn't really happen, anyway," she added.

Rosendo buried his head in his hands and groaned aloud. Carmen slipped down from José's lap and went unsteadily to the old man.

"They were not yours, those thoughts, padre dear," putting her arms around his neck. "But they were whipping you

hard, just as if you belonged to them. And see, it just shows that bad thoughts can't do anything. Look, I'm all right!" She stood off and smiled at him.

Rosendo reached out and clasped her in his long arms. *"Chiquita,"* he cried, "if you were not, your old padre Rosendo would throw himself into the lake!"

"More bad thoughts, padre dear!" She laughed and held up a warning finger. "But I was to tell you the *desayuno* was ready; and see, we have forgotten all about it!" Her merry laugh rang through the room like a silver bell.

After breakfast José took Rosendo, still shaking, into the parish house. "I think," he said gravely, "that we have learned another lesson, have we not, *amigo?"*

Rosendo's head sank upon his great chest.

"And, if we are wise, we will profit by it—will we not, *compadre?"* He waited a moment, then continued:

"I have been seeing in a dim way, *amigo,* that our thought is always the vital thing to be reckoned with, more than we have even suspected before. I believe there is a mental law, though I cannot formulate it, that in some way the thoughts we hold use us, and become externalized in actions. You were wild with fear for Carmen, and your thoughts of Diego were murderous. *Bien,* they almost drove you to murder, and they reacted upon the very one you most love. Can you not see it, *amigo?"*

Rosendo looked up. His face was drawn. "Padre—I am almost afraid to think of anything—now."

"Ah, *amigo,"* said José with deep compassion, "I, too, have had a deep lesson in thinking these past two days. I had evolved many beautiful theories, and worked out wonderful plans during these weeks of peace. Then suddenly came the news of the revolution, and, *presto!* they all flew to pieces! But Carmen—nothing disturbs her. Is it because she is too young to fear? I think not, *amigo,* I think not. I think, rather, that it is because she is too wise."

"But—she is not of the earth, Padre." The old man shook his head dubiously.

"Rosendo, she is! She is human, just as we are. But in some way she has learned a great truth, and that is that wrong thinking brings all the discord and woe that afflict the human race. We know this is true, you and I. In a way we have known it all our lives. But why, *why* do we not practice it? Why do I yield so readily to fear; and you to revenge? I rather think if we loved our enemies we would have none, for our only enemies are the thoughts that become externalized in wrong thought-concepts. And even this externalization is only

in our own consciousness. It is there, and only there, that we see evil."

"Quien sabe? Padre," replied Rosendo, slowly shaking his head. "We know so little—so little!"

"But, Rosendo, we know enough to try to be like Carmen—"

"Caramba, yes! And I try to be like her. But whenever danger threatens her, the very devils seize me, and I am no longer myself."

"Yes, yes; I know. But will not her God protect her? Can not we trust her to Him?" José spoke with the conviction of right, however inconsistent his past conduct might have been.

"True, Padre—and I must try to love Diego—I know—though I hate him as the devil hates the cross! Carmen would say that he was used by bad thoughts, wouldn't she?"

"Just so. She would not see the man, but the impersonal thought that seems to use him. And I believe she knows how to meet that kind of thought."

"I know it, Padre. *Bien,* I must try to love him. I *will* try. And—Padre, whenever he comes into my mind I will try to think of him as God's child—though I know he isn't!"

José laughed loudly at this. *"Hombre!"* he exclaimed. "You must not think of the human Diego as God's child! You must always think of the *real* child of God for which this human concept, Diego, stands in your consciousness. Do you understand me?"

"No, Padre. But perhaps I can learn. I will try. But Diego shall live. And—*Bien,* now let us talk about the company of militia. But here comes the Alcalde. *Caramba!* what does he want?"

With much oily ceremony and show of affection, Don Mario greeted the pair.

"I bring a message from Padre Diego," he announced pompously, after the exchange of courtesies. *"Bien,* it is quite unfortunate that our friend Rosendo feels so hard toward him, especially as Don Diego has so long entrusted Carmen to Rosendo's care. But—his letter, *Señor Padre,"* placing a folded paper in José's hand.

Silently, but with swelling indignation, José read:

"Dear Brother in Christ: It is, as you must know, because of our good Rosendo's foolish anger that I relieve him of the embarrassment of my presence in Simití. Not that I fear bodily harm, but lest his thoughtlessness urge him to attempt injury upon me; in which case nothing but unhappiness could result, as my two negro servants would protect me with their own lives. I rather choose peace, and to that end quietly depart. But I leave behind my bleeding heart in the little Carmen; and I beg that you will at once hand her over to the excellent Don Mario, with whom I have made arrangements to have her sent to me

in due season, whether in Banco or Remedios, I can not at present say. I am minded to make an excellent report of your parish to Don Wenceslas, and I am sure he will lend you support in your labors for the welfare of the good folk of Simiti. Do not forget to include the little locket with Carmen's effects when you deliver her to Don Mario. I assure you of my warm affection for you, and for Rosendo, who mistakes in his zeal to persecute me, as he will some day learn; and I commend you both to the protecting care of our blessed Mother Mary.

"I kiss your hand, as your servant in Christ,

"DIEGO GUILLERMO POLO."

José looked long and fixedly at the Alcalde. "Don Mario," he finally said, "do you believe Diego to be the father of Carmen?"

"*Cierto,* Padre, I know it!" replied the official with fervor. "He has the proofs!"

"And what are they, may I ask?"

"I do not know, Padre; only that he has them. Surely the child is his, and must be sent to him when he commands. Meantime, you see, he gives the order to deliver her to me. He has kindly arranged to relieve you and Rosendo of further care of the girl."

"Don Mario," said José with terrible earnestness, "I will give you the benefit of the doubt, and say that Diego has basely deceived you. But as for him—he lies."

"*Hombre!* But I can not help if you disbelieve him. Still, you must comply with his request; otherwise, the Bishop may compel you to do so."

José realized the terrible possibility of truth in this statement. For an instant all his old despair rushed upon him. Then he braced himself. Rosendo was holding his wrath in splendid check.

"*Bien,* Don Mario," resumed José, after a long meditation. "Let us ask our good Rosendo to leave us for a little moment that we may with greater freedom discuss the necessary arrangements. *Bien, amigo!*" holding up a hand to check Rosendo, who was rising menacingly before the Alcalde. "You will leave it to me." He threw Rosendo a significant look; and the latter, after a momentary hesitation, bowed and passed out of the room.

"*A propósito, amigo,*" resumed José, turning to the Alcalde and assuming utter indifference with regard to Carmen. "As you will recall, I stood security for Rosendo's debts. The thirty *pesos* which he owes you will be ready this evening."

The Alcalde smiled genially and rubbed his fat palms together. "*Muy bien,*" he murmured.

José reflected. Then:

"But, Don Mario, with regard to Carmen, justice must be done, is it not so?"

"Cierto, Padre; and Padre Diego has the proofs—"

"Certainly; I accept your word for your conviction in the matter. But you will agree that there is something to be said for Rosendo. He has fed, clothed, and sheltered the girl for some eight years. Let us see, at the rate you charge your *peones,* say, fifty *pesos* a day, that would amount to—"

He took paper and pencil from the table and made a few figures.

"—to just fourteen hundred and sixty *pesos oro,"* he concluded. "This, then, is the amount now due Rosendo for the care of Diego's child. You say he has made arrangements with you to care for her until he can send for her. *Bien,* we will deliver her to you for Diego, but only upon payment of the sum which I have just mentioned. Otherwise, how will Rosendo be reimbursed for the expense of her long maintenance?"

"Ca—ram—ba! Fourteen hundred and sixty *pesos oro!* Why—it is a fortune!" ejaculated the outwitted Alcalde, his eyes bulging over his puffy cheeks.

"And," continued José calmly, "if we deliver the girl to you to-day, I will retain the thirty *pesos oro* which Rosendo owes you, and you will stand surety for the balance of the debt, fourteen hundred and thirty, in that case."

"Diablo! but I will do nothing of the kind!" exploded the Alcalde. *"Caramba!* let Diego come and look after his own brat!"

"Then we shall consider the interview at an end, no?"

"But my thirty *pesos oro?"*

"To-night. And as much more for additional supplies. We are still working together, are we not, Don Mario?" he added suggestively.

José in Simití with money discounted a million Diegos fleeing through the jungle. The Alcalde's heavy face melted in a foolish grin.

"Cierto, buen Padre! and—La Libertad?"

"I have strong hopes," replied José with bland assurance, while a significant look came into his face. Then he rose and bowed the Alcalde out. "And, Don Mario—"

He put a finger on his lips.

"—we remain very silent, no?"

"Cierto, Padre, cierto! I am the grave itself!"

As the bulky official waddled off to his little shop, José turned back into his house with a great sigh of relief. Another problem had been met—temporarily.

He summoned Carmen to the day's lessons.

CHAPTER 17

WITHIN the month Juan brought from Bodega Central the glad news of the revolution's utter collapse. The anti-clerical element, scenting treachery in their own ranks, and realizing almost from the outset that the end was a matter of only a few weeks, offered to capitulate on terms which they felt would be less distressing to their pride than those which their victors might dictate after inflicting a crushing defeat. The conservatives did not take advantage of the *fiasco*, but offered conciliation in the way of reapportioning certain minor public offices, and a show of somewhat lessened clerical influence. Peace followed rapidly. The fires of Jacobinism and popery were again banked, while priest and politician, statesman and orator set up the board and rearranged the pawns for the next play.

Nothing further had been heard of Padre Diego during the month, excepting that he had arrived at the settlement of Juncal in a state of extreme agitation, and had hurriedly set out that same day along the trail to the San Lucas district. Rosendo, meanwhile, assured that Diego would not return in the immediate future, yielded to José's persuasion and departed at once for Guamocó on the news of the revolution's close. Simití had remained unmolested; and now, with the assurance of indefinite peace, the old town dropped quickly back into her wonted state of listless repose, and yielded to the drowsy, dreamy influences that hover always about this scene of mediaeval romance.

José had recovered his equipoise; and even when Juan, returning from his next trip down to the river, brought the priest another sharp letter from Wenceslas, written in the Bishop's name, he read it without a tremor. The letter complained of José's silence, and especially of his failure to assist the Catholic cause in this crisal hour by contributions of Peter's Pence. Nor had any report been received in Cartagena relative to the state of the parish of Simití, its resources and communicants; and not a *peso* had been offered to the support of their so dear citadel at a time when its enemies threatened its gates. José smiled happily as he penned his reply, for he knew that with Rosendo's next return their contributions to Cartagena would begin. That meant the quieting of Wenceslas, regardless of whatever report Diego might make. And it was evident from this letter that neither Diego nor the Alcalde had as yet communicated anything of a startling nature to

Wenceslas regarding those things to which the priest had consecrated himself in Simití.

José's life was never before so full. And never so sweet. To his little flock he was now preaching the Word of God only as he could interpret it to meet their simple needs. Gradually, as he got closer to them, he sought to enlighten them and to draw them at least a little way out of the dense materialism of their present religious beliefs. He also strove to give them the best of his own worldly knowledge, and to this end was talking to them three nights a week in the church building, where the simple people hung upon his words like children enwrapped in fairy lore. He was holding regular Sunday services, and offering Masses during the week for those of his parishioners who requested them, and who would have been shocked, puzzled, and unhappy had he refused to do so, or attempted to prove their uselessness. He was likewise saying diurnal Masses for the little Maria, to whom, as she lay breathing her last in his arms in Cartagena, he had given the promise to offer them daily in her behalf for a year.

Nor was this the extent of his loving sacrifice for the girl. He had already sent a small sum of money to Catalina by Captain Julio, who promised to arrange at Calamar for its transmission, and for the safe convoy of a similar small packet monthly to Cartagena and into the hands of the two women who were caring for the infant son of Wenceslas and the ill-fated Maria. He had promised her that night that he would care for her babe. And his life had long since shown what a promise meant to him. He knew he would be unable to learn of the child's progress directly from these women, for they were both illiterate. But Captain Julio brought an encouraging message from them, and assured José that he would always make inquiry for the babe on his trips down the river. José's long-distance dealings with the genial captain had been conducted through Juan, who had constituted himself the priest's faithful servant and the distant worshiper of the child Carmen.

"Padre José," Juan had said one day, striving vainly to hide his embarrassment, "the little Carmen grows very beautiful. She is like the Pascua-flower, that shines through the ferns in the *caño*. She is like the great blue butterfly, that floats on the sunbeams that sift through the forest trees."

"Yes, Juan, she is very beautiful."

"Padre, you love her much, is it not so?"

"Very much, indeed, Juan."

"And I, Padre, I, too, love her." He paused and dug the hard ground with his bare toes.

"Padre," he resumed, "the little Carmen will marry—some day, will she not?"

José started. The thought had never occurred to him! Carmen marry? After all, she was human, and— But, no, he could not, he would not, think of it!

"Why, Juan—I—cannot say—"

"But, Padre, she will." Juan was growing bolder. "And—and, Padre, I—I should like it if she would marry me. Ah, *Señor Padre,* already I adore her!"

José could not be angry. The faithful lad was deeply sincere. And the girl would reach the marriageable age of that country in all too short a time.

"But, Juan," he remonstrated, "you are too young! And Carmen—why, she is but a child!"

"True, Padre. But I am seventeen—and I will wait for her. Only say now that she shall be mine when the time comes. Padre, say it now!"

José was deeply touched by the boy's earnest pleading. He put his arm affectionately about the strong young shoulders.

"Wait, Juan, and see what develops. She is very, very young. We must all wait. And, meanwhile, do you serve her, faithfully, as you see Rosendo and me doing."

The boy's face brightened with hope. "Padre," he exclaimed, "I am her slave!"

José went back to his work with Carmen with his thought full of mingled conjecture and resolve. He had thus far outlined nothing for the girl's future. Nor had he the faintest idea what the years might bring forth. But he knew that, in a way, he was aiding in the preparation of the child for something different from the dull, animal existence with which she was at present surrounded, and that her path in life must eventually lead far, far away from the shabby, crumbling town which now constituted her material world. His task he felt to be tremendous in the responsibility which it laid upon him. What had he ever known of the manner of rearing children! He had previously given the question of child-education but scant consideration, although he had always held certain radical ideas regarding it; and some of these he was putting to the test. But had his present work been forecast while he lay sunken in despair on the river steamer, he would have repudiated the prediction as a figment of the imagination. Yet the gleam which flashed through his paralyzed brain that memorable day in the old church, when Rosendo opened his full heart to him, had roused him suddenly from his long and despondent lethargy, and worked a quick and marvelous renovation in his wasted life. Following the lead of this unusual child, he was now, though with many vicissitudes, slowly passing out of his prison of egoism, and into the full, clear sunlight of a world which he knew to be far less material than spiritual.

With the awakening had come the almost frenzied desire to realize in Carmen what he had failed to develop within himself; a vague hope that she might fill the void which a lifetime of longing had expressed. A tremendous opportunity now presented. Already the foundation had been well laid—but not by earthly hands. His task was to build upon it; and, as he did so, to learn himself. He had never before realized more than faintly the awful power for good or evil which a parent wields over a child. He had no more than the slightest conception of the mighty problem of child-education. And now Carmen herself had shown him that real education must be reared upon a foundation *wholly spiritual.* Yet this, he knew, was just what the world's educators did not do. He could see now how in the world the religious instinct of the child is early quenched, smothered into complete or partial extinction beneath the false tutelage of parents and teachers, to whom years and adult stature are synonymous with wisdom, and who themselves have learned to see the universe only through the opaque lenses of matter and chance.

"If children were not falsely educated to know all manner of evil," he mused, "what spiritual powers might they not develop in adult life, powers that are as yet not even imagined! But their primitive religious instinct is regarded by the worldly-wise parent as but a part of the infant existence, which must soon give place to the more solid and real beliefs and opinions which the world in general regards as established and conventional, even though their end is death. And so they teach their children to make evil real, even while admonishing them to protect themselves against it and eventually so to rise as to overcome it, little realizing that the carnal belief of the reality of evil which a child is taught to accept permeates its pure thought like an insidious poison, and becomes externalized in the conventional routine existence of mind in matter, soul in body, a few brief years of mingled good and evil, and then darkness—the end here certain; the future life a vague, impossible conjecture."

José determined that Carmen's education should be spiritual, largely because he knew, constituted as she was, it could not well be otherwise. And he resolved that from his teachings she should glean nothing but happiness, naught but good. With his own past as a continual warning, he vowed first that never should the mental germ of fear be planted within this child's mind. He himself had cringed like a coward before it all his desolate life. And so his conduct had been consistently slavish, specious, and his thought stamped with the brand of the counterfeit. He knew not how much longer he must strug-

gle with it. But he knew that, if he would progress, the warfare must go on, until at length he should put it under his feet. His mind still bore the almost ineradicable mold of the fear deeply graven into it by the ignorant opinions, the worldly, material, unspiritual beliefs of his dear but unwise parents. His life had been hedged with baleful shadows because of it; and over every bright picture there hung its black draping. As he looked back over the path along which he had come, he could see every untoward event, every unhappiness and bitter disappointment, as the externalization of fear in some form, the germ of which had been early planted in the fertile soil of his plastic brain. Without it he might have risen to towering heights. Under its domination he had sunk until the swirling stream of life had eddied him upon the desolate shores of Simití. In the hands of the less fearful he had been a puppet. In his own eyes he was a fear-shaped manikin, the shadow of God's real man. The fear-germ had multiplied within him a billionfold, and in the abundant crop had yielded a mental depression and deep-seated melancholy that had utterly stifled his spirit and dried the marrow of his bones.

They were not pleasant, these thoughts. But now José could draw from them something salutary, something definite to shape and guide his work with Carmen. She, at least, should not grow up the slave of fearsome opinions and beliefs born of dense ignorance. Nor should the baseless figments of puerile religious systems find lodgment within her clear thought. The fear element, upon which so much of so-called Christian belief has been reared, and the damnable suggestions of hell and purgatory, of unpardonable sin and endless suffering, the stock-in-trade of poet, priest and prelate up to and overlapping our present brighter day, should remain forever a closed volume to this child, a book as wildly imaginative and as unacceptable as the fabled travels of Maundeville.

"I believe," he would murmur to himself, as he strolled alone in the dusk beside the limpid lake, "that if I could plant myself firmly on the Scriptural statement that God is love, that He is good; and if I could regard Him as infinite mind, while at the same time striving to recognize no reality, no intelligence or life in things material, I could eventually triumph over the whole false concept, and rise out of beliefs of sickness, discord, and death, into an unalterable consciousness of good only."

He had made a beginning when he strove to realize that man is not separated from God; that God is not a far-off abstraction; and that infinite mind is, as Carmen insisted, "everywhere."

"It is only the five physical senses that tell us evil is real," he reflected. "Indeed, without their testimony we would be utterly unconscious of evil! And I am convinced that their testimony is specious, and that we see, hear, and feel only in thought, or in belief. We think the sensations of seeing, hearing, and feeling come to us through the medium of these senses as outward, fleshly contrivances, which in some way communicate with the mind and bridge the gulf between the material and the mental. In reality, we do but see, hear and feel *our own thoughts!* The philosophers, many of them, said as much centuries ago. So did Jesus. But—the human mind has been mesmerized, simply mesmerized!"

These things he pondered day by day, and watched to see them wrought out in the life of Carmen. "Ah, yes," he would sometimes say, as spiritual ideas unfolded to him, "you evolve beautiful theories, my good José, and you say many brave things. But, when the day of judgment comes, as it did when Juan brought you the news of the revolution, then, alas! your theories fly to pieces, and you find yourself very human, very material, and your God hidden behind the distant clouds. When the test comes, you find you cannot prove your beliefs."

Yet the man did not often indulge in self-condemnation, for somehow he knew his ideas were right. When he realized the character and specious nature of evil, and realized, too, that "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," he knew that the stirring up of evil by good, and the shaking of the ancient foundations of carnal belief within his mentality, might mean fiery trials, still awaiting him. And yet, the crown was for him who should overcome. Overcome what? The false opinions of mankind, the ignorant beliefs in matter and evil. For what, after all, is responsible for all the evil in this world of ours? What but a false concept of God? "And if I keep my nose buried forever in matter, how can I hope to see God, who is Spirit? And how can I follow the Christ unless I think as he thought?" he said.

But it was in the classroom with Carmen that he always received his greatest stimulus.

"See, Padre dear," she said one day, "if I erase a wrong figure and then set down the right one instead, I get the right answer. And it is just like that when we think. If we always put good thoughts in the place of the bad ones, why, everything comes out right, doesn't it?"

José smiled at the apt comparison. "Of course, *chiquita*," he replied. "Only, in your algebra you know which are the right figures to put down. But how do you know which thoughts are right?"

"I always know, Padre. I can't make even the least mistake about the thoughts. Why, it is easier to mistake with figures than it is with thoughts."

"How is that, little one?"

"Because, if you always think God *first*, you can never think wrong. Now can you? And if you think of other things first you are almost sure to think of the wrong thing, is it not so, Padre?"

The priest had to admit the force of her statement.

"And, you know, Padre dear," the girl went on, "when I understand the right rule in algebra, the answer just comes of itself. Well, it is so with everything when we understand that God is the right rule—you call Him principle, don't you?—well, when we know that He is the only rule for everything, then the answers to all our problems just come of themselves."

Aye, thought José, the healing works of the great Master were only the "signs following," the "answers" to the people's problems, the sure evidence that Jesus understood the Christ-principle.

"And when you say that God is the right rule for everything, just what do you mean, *chiquita*?"

"That He is everywhere," the girl replied.

"That He is infinite and omnipresent good, then?" the priest amplified.

"He is good—and everywhere," the child repeated firmly.

"And the necessary corollary of that is, that there is no evil," José added.

"I don't know what you mean by corollary, Padre dear. It's a big word, isn't it?"

"I mean—I think I know how you would put it, little one—if God is everywhere, then there is nothing bad. Is that right?"

"Yes, Padre. Don't you see?"

Assuredly he saw. He saw that a fact can have no real opposite; that any predicated opposite must be supposition. And evil is the supposition; whereas good is the fact. The latter is "plus," and the former "minus." No wonder the origin of evil has never been found, although humanity has struggled with the problem for untold ages! Jesus diagnosed evil as a lie. He gave it the minus sign, the sign of nothingness. The world has tried to make it positive, something. From the false sense of evil as a reality has come the equally false sense of man's estrangement from God, through some fictitious "fall"—a curse, truly, upon the human intellect, but not of God's infliction. For false belief always curses with a reign of discord, which endures until the belief becomes corrected by truth. From the beginning, the human race has

vainly sought to postulate an equal and opposite to everything in the realm of both the spiritual and material. It has been hypnotized, obsessed, blinded, by this false zeal. The resultant belief in "dualism" has rendered hate the equal and opposite of Love, evil the equal and opposite of Good, and discord the eternal opponent of Harmony. To cope with evil as a reality is to render it immortal in our consciousness. To know its unreality is to master it.

"Throughout life," José mused, "every positive has its negative, every affirmation its denial. But the opposites never mingle. And, moreover, the positive always dispels the negative, thus proving the specious nature of the latter. Darkness flees before the light, and ignorance dissolves in the morning rays of knowledge. Both cannot be real. The positive alone bears the stamp of immortality. Carmen has but one fundamental rule: *God is everywhere.* This gives her a sense of immanent power, with which all things are possible."

Thus with study and meditation the days flowed past, with scarcely a ripple to break their quiet monotony. Rosendo came, and went again. He brought back at the end of his first month's labors on the newly discovered deposit some ninety *pesos* in gold. He had reached the bed-rock, and the deposit was yielding its maximum; but the yield would continue for many months, he said. His exultation overleaped all bounds, and it was with difficulty that José could bring him to a consideration of the problems still confronting them.

"I think, Rosendo," said the priest, "that we will send, say, thirty *pesos* this month to Cartagena; the same next month; and then increase the amount slightly. This method is sure to have a beneficial effect upon the ecclesiastical authorities there."

"Fine!" ejaculated Rosendo. "And how will you send it, Padre?"

José pondered the situation. "We cannot send the gold direct to the Bishop, for that would excite suspicion. Masses, you know, are not paid for in gold dust and nuggets. And we have no money. Nor could we get the gold exchanged for bills here in Simití, even if we dared run the risk of our discovery becoming known."

For the Alcalde was already nosing about in an effort to ascertain the source of the gold with which Rosendo had just cancelled his debt and purchased further supplies. José now saw that, under existing conditions, it would be utterly impossible for Rosendo to obtain titles to mineral properties through Don Mario. He spent hours seeking a solution of the involved problem. Then, just before Rosendo departed again for the mountains, José called him into the parish house.

"Rosendo, I think I see a way. Bring me one of the paper boxes of candles which you have just purchased from Don Mario."

"*Caramba!* Padre," queried the surprised Rosendo, as he returned with the box, "and what is this for?"

"I merely want to get the name of the firm which sold the candles. The Empresa Alemania, Barranquilla. Good! Now listen. I have a method that is roundabout, but certainly promises much. I will write to the firm, appointing them my agents while I pose as José Rincón, miner. The agency established, I will send them our gold each month, asking them to return to me its equivalent in bills, deducting, of course, their commission. Then I will send these bills, or such part as we deem wise, to Wenceslas. Each month Juan, who will be sworn to secrecy, will convey the gold to Bodega Central in time to meet Captain Julio's boat. The captain will both deliver the gold to the Empresa Alemania, and bring back the bills in exchange. Then, from Simití, and in the regular manner, I will send the small packet of bills to Wenceslas as contributions from the parish. We thus throw Don Mario off the scent, and arouse no suspicion in any quarter. As I receive mail matter at various times, the Alcalde will not know but what I also receive consignments of money from my own sources. I think the plan will work out. Juan already belongs to us. What, then, is there to fear?"

And so, as it was arranged, it worked out. Juan reveled in the honor of such intimate relations with the priest and Rosendo, and especially in the thought that he was working in secret for the girl he adored. By the time Rosendo returned again from Guamocó, José had sent his first consignment of money to the Bishop, carefully directing it to Wenceslas, personally, and had received an acknowledgment in a letter which caused him deep thought.

"To further stimulate the piety of your communicants," it read, "and arouse them to more generous contributions to our glorious cause, you will inform them that, if their monetary contributions do not diminish in amount for the coming year, they will be made participants in the four solemn *Novenas* which will be offered by His Grace, the Bishop of Cartagena. Moreover, if their contributions increase, the names of the various contributors will be included in the one hundred Masses which are to be offered in December at the Shrine of Our Lady of Chiquinquía for their spiritual and temporal welfare. Contributors will also have a High Mass after death, offered by one of His Grace's assistants, as soon as the notification of death is received here. In addition to these, His Grace, always mindful of the former importance of the parish of Simití, and acknowledging as its special patron the ever blessed Virgin, has arranged to bestow the episcopal blessing upon an image of the Sacred Heart, which will be shipped to his faithful children in Simití when the

amount of their contributions shall have met the expense thereof. Let us keep ever in mind the pious words of the Bl. Margaret Mary, who has conveyed to us the assurance which she received directly from Our Blessed Lord that He finds great joy in beholding His Sacred Heart visibly represented, that it may touch the hard hearts of mankind. Our blessed Saviour promised the gracious Margaret Mary that He would pour out abundantly of His rich treasure upon all who honor this image, and that it shall draw down from heaven every blessing upon those who adore and reverence it. Inform your parishioners that the recital of the offering, 'O, Sacred Heart of Jesus, may it be everywhere adored!' carries a hundred days' indulgence each time.

"You will bear in mind that the General Intention for this month is The Conversion of America. Though our Church is founded on the Rock, and is to last forever, so that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her, nevertheless she has been called upon to withstand many assaults from her enemies, the advocates of *modernism*, in the land of liberal thought to our north. These assaults, though painful to her, can never be fatal to her spiritual life, although they unfortunately are so to many of her dear children, who yield to the insidious persuasions of the heretics who do the work of Satan among the Lord's sheep. New and fantastic religions are springing up like noxious weeds in America of the north, and increasing infidelity is apparent on every hand. The Christ prayed that there might be one fold and one shepherd. It is for us this month to pray for the great day when they will be accomplished. But we must be united over the interests of the Sacred Heart. Therefore, liberal plenary indulgences will be granted to those of the faithful who contribute to this glorious cause, so dear to the heart of the blessed Saviour. We enclose leaflets indicating the three degrees, consisting of the Morning Offering, Our Father and ten Hail Marys daily, for the Pope and his interests, and the degree of reparation, by which a plenary indulgence may be gained.

"Stimulate your parishioners to compete joyfully for the statue of the Blessed Virgin, which we mentioned to you in our former communication. Teach them, especially, their entire dependence on Mary, on her prayers to God for their deliverance and welfare. Reveal to them her singularly powerful influence in the shaping of all great historical events of the world; how never has she refused our prayers to exert her mighty influence with her all-potent Son, when she has been appealed to in sincerity, for it rejoices the Sacred Heart of Jesus to yield to the requests of His Blessed Mother. Mary is omnipotent, for she can ask no favor of her Son that He will not grant. Competition for possession of this sacred image, which carries the potent blessing of His Holiness, should be regarded a privilege, and you will so impress it upon the minds of your parishioners.

"Finally, His Grace requests that you will immediately procure whatever information you may regarding the mineral resources of the district of Guamocó, and indicate upon a sketch the location of its various mines, old or new, as known to its inhabitants. Diligent and careful inquiry made by yourself among the people of the district will reveal many hidden facts regarding its resources, which should be made known to His Grace at the earliest possible moment, in view of the active preparations now in progress to forestall the precipitation of another political uprising with its consequent strain upon our Holy Church."

"Money! money! money!" cried José. "One would think the Christ had established his Church solely for gold!"

He folded the letter and looked out through the rear door

to where Carmen sat, teaching Cucumbra a new trick. He realized then that never before had he been so far from the Holy Catholic faith as at that moment. And Carmen—

"Good God!" he muttered, as his eyes rested upon the child. "If the Church should get possession of Carmen, what would it do with her? Would it not set its forces to work to teach her that evil is a reality—that it is as powerful as good—that God formed man and the universe out of dust—that Jesus came down from a starry heaven that he might die to appease the wrath of a man-like Father—that Mary pleads with the Lord and Jesus, and by her powerful logic induces them to spare mankind and grant their foolish desires—all the dribble and rubbish of outlandish theology that has accumulated around the nucleus of pure Christianity like a gathering snowball throughout the ages! To make the great States up north dominantly Catholic, Rome must—simply *must*—have the children to educate, that she may saturate their absorbent minds with these puerile, undemonstrable, pagan beliefs before the child has developed its own independent thought. How wise is she—God, how worldly wise and cunning! And I still her priest—"

Carmen came bounding in, followed pellmell by Cucumbra. Cantar-las-horas stalked dignifiedly after her, and stopped at the threshold, where he stood with cocked head and blinking eyes, wondering what move his animated young mistress would make next.

"Padre!" she exclaimed, "the sun is down, and it is time for our walk!"

She seized his hand and drew him out into the road. The play of her expression as she looked up and laughed into his face was like the dance of sunbeams on moving water. They turned down the narrow street which led to the lake. As was her wont, in every object about her, in every trifling event, the child discovered rich treasures of happiness. The pebbles which she tossed with her bare toes were mines of delight. The pigs, which turned up their snouts expectantly as she stooped to scratch their dusty backs—the matronly hens that followed clucking after her—the black babies that toddled out to greet the *Cura*—all yielded a wealth of delight and interest. She seemed to José to uncover joy by a means not unlike the divining rod, which points to hidden gold where to the eye there is naught but barren ground.

Near the margin of the lake they stopped at the door of a cottage, where they were awaited by the matron who displayed a finger wrapped in a bit of cloth. She greeted the priest courteously.

"Señor Padre," she said, "this morning I had the misfortune to cut my finger while peeling yuccas, and I am not sure whether a piece of the skin went into the pot or not. *Bueno,* the yuccas are all cooked; and now my man says he will not eat them, for this is Friday, and there may be meat with the yuccas. What shall I do? Was it wicked to cook the yuccas, not knowing if a bit of the skin from my finger had fallen into the pot?"

José stood dumfounded before such ignorant credulity. Then he shook his head and replied sadly, "No, señora, it was not wicked. Tell your man he may eat the yuccas."

The woman's face brightened, and she hastened into the house to apprise her spouse of the *Cura's* decision.

"God help us!" muttered José under his breath. "Two thousand years of Christianity, and still the world knows not what Jesus taught!"

"But you told me he had good thoughts, Padre dear," said the little voice at his side, as he walked slowly away with bended head. "And that is enough to know."

"Why do you say that, Carmen?" asked José, somewhat petulantly.

"Because, Padre, if he had good thoughts, he thought about God—didn't he? And if he thought about God, he always thought of something good. And if we always think about good—well, isn't that enough?"

José's eyes struggled with hers. She almost invariably framed her replies with an interrogation, and, whether he would or not, he must perforce give answers which he knew in his heart were right, and yet which the sight of his eyes all too frequently denied.

"Padre, you are not thinking about God now—are you?"

"I am, indeed, child!" he answered abruptly.

"Well—perhaps you are thinking *about* Him; but you are not thinking *with* Him—are you?—the way He thinks. You know, He sends us His thoughts, and we have to pick them out from all the others that aren't His, and then think them. If the señora and her man had been thinking God's thoughts, they wouldn't have been afraid to eat a piece of meat on Friday—would they?"

Cucumbra, forgetting his many months of instruction, suddenly yielded to the goad of animal instinct and started along the beach in mad pursuit of a squealing pig. Carmen dashed after him. As José watched her lithe, active little body bobbing over the shales behind the flying animals, she seemed to him like an animated sunbeam sporting among the shadows.

"Why should life," he murmured aloud, "beginning in ra-

diance, proceed in ever deepening gloom, and end at last in black night? Why, but for the false education in evil which is inflicted upon us! The joys, the unbounded bliss of childhood, do indeed gush from its innocence—its innocence of the blighting belief in mixed good and evil—innocence of the false beliefs, the undemonstrable opinions, the mad worldly ambitions, the carnal lust, bloated pride, and black ignorance of men! It all comes from not knowing God, to know whom is life eternal! The struggle and mad strife of man—what does it all amount to, when 'in the end he shall be a fool'? Do we in this latest of the centuries, with all our boasted progress in knowledge, really know so much, after all? Alas! we know nothing—nothing!"

"Come, Padre," cried Carmen, returning to him, "we are going to just try now to have all the nice thoughts we can. Let's just look all around us and see if we can't think good thoughts about everything. And, do you know, Padre dear, I've tried it, and when I look at things and something tries to make me see if there could possibly be anything bad about them—why, I find there can't! Try it, and see for yourself."

José knew it. He knew that the minds of men are so profaned by constantly looking at evil that their thoughts are tinged with it. He was striving to look up. But in doing so he was combating a habit grown mighty by years of indulgence.

"When you always think good about a thing," the girl went on, "you never can tell what it will do. But good *always* comes from it. I know. I do it all the time. If things look bad, I just say, 'Why look, here's something trying to tell me that two and two are seven!' And then it goes away."

"Your purity and goodness resist evil involuntarily, little one," said José, more to himself than to the child.

"Why, Padre, what big words!"

"No, little one, it is just the meaning of the words that is big," he replied.

The girl was silent for some moments. Then:

"Padre dear, I never thought of it before—but it is true: we don't see the meaning of words with the same eyes that we see trees and stones and people, do we?"

José studied the question. "I don't quite understand what you mean, *chiquita*," he was finally forced to answer.

"Well," she resumed, "the meaning of a word isn't something that we can pick up, like a stone; or see, as we see the lake out there."

"No, Carmen, the meaning is spiritual—mental; it is not physically tangible. It is not seen with the fleshly eyes."

"The meaning of a word is the inside of it, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is the inside, the soul, of the word."

"And we don't see the word, either, do we?" She shook her brown curls in vigorous negation.

"No, little one, we see only written or printed symbols; or hear only sounds that convey to us the words. But the words themselves are mental. We do not see them."

"No, we think them." She meditated a while. "But, Padre dear," she continued, "the inside, or soul, of everything is mental. We never see it. We have to think it."

"Yes, you are right. The things we think we see are only symbols. They stand for the real things."

"Padre, they don't stand for anything!" she replied abruptly.

José looked down at her in surprise. He waited.

"Padre, the real things are the things we don't see. And the things we think we see are not real at all!"

José had ere this learned not to deny her rugged statements, but to study them for their inner meaning, which the child often found too deep for her limited vocabulary to express.

"The things we think we see," he said, though he was addressing his own thought, "are called the physical. The things we do not see or cognize with the physical senses are called mental, or spiritual. Well?" he queried, looking down again into the serious little face.

"Padre, the very greatest things are those that we don't see at all!"

"True, *chiquita*. Love, life, joy, knowledge, wisdom, health, harmony—all these are spiritual ideas. The physical sometimes manifests them—and sometimes does not. And in the end, called death, it ceases altogether to manifest them."

"But—these things—the very greatest things there are—are the souls of everything—is it not so, Padre dear?"

"It must be, *chiquita*."

"And all these things came from God, and He is everywhere, and so He is the soul of everything, no?"

He made the same affirmative reply.

"Padre—don't you see it?—we are not seeing things all around us! We don't see real things that we call trees and stones and people! We see only what we *think* we see. We see things that are not there at all! We see—"

"Yes, we see only our thoughts. And we think we see them as objects all about us, as trees, and houses, and people. But in the final analysis we see only thoughts," he finished.

"But these thoughts do not come from God," she insisted.

"No," he replied slowly, "because they often manifest discord and error. I think I grasp what is struggling in your mind, *chiquita*. God is—"

"Everywhere," she interrupted.

"He is everywhere, and therefore He is the soul—the inside —the heart and core—of everything. He is mind, and His thoughts are real, and are the only real thoughts there are. He is truth. The opposite of truth is a lie. But, in reality, truth cannot have an opposite. Therefore, a lie is a supposition. And so the thought that we seem to see externalized all about us, and that we call physical objects, is supposition only. And, a supposition being unreal, the whole physical universe, including material man, is unreal—is a supposition, a supposition of mixed good and evil, for it manifests both. It is the lie about God. And, since a lie has no real existence, this human concept of a universe and mankind composed of matter is utterly unreal, an image of thought, an illusion, existing in false thought only—a belief—a supposition pure and simple!"

As he talked he grew more and more animated. He seemed to forget the presence of the child, and appeared to be addressing only his own insistent questionings.

They walked along together in silence for some moments. Then the girl again took up the conversation.

"Padre," she said, "you know, you taught me to prove my problems in arithmetic and algebra. Well, I have proved something about thinking, too. If I think a thing, and just keep thinking it, pretty soon I see it—in some way—outside of me."

A light seemed to flash through José's mental chambers, and he recalled the words of the explorer in Cartagena. Yes, that was exactly what he had said—"every thought that comes into the mind tends to become *externalized,* either upon the body as a physical condition, or in the environment, or as an event, good or bad." It was a law, dimly perceived, but nevertheless sufficiently understood in its workings to indicate a tremendous field as yet all but unknown. The explorer had called it the law of the externalization of thought. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," said the Master, twenty centuries before. Did he recognize the law?

José's thought swept over his past. Had his own wrong thinking, or the wrong thought of others, been the cause of his unhappiness and acute mental suffering? But why personalize it? What difference whether it be called his, or the Archbishop's, or whose? Let it suffice that it was false thought, undirected by the Christ-principle, God, that had been externalized in the wreckage which he now called his past life.

He again stood face to face with the most momentous question ever propounded by a waiting world: the question of causation. And he knew now that causation was wholly spiritual.

"Padre dear, you said just now that God was mind. But, if that is true, there is only one mind, for God is everywhere."

"It must be so, *chiquita,*" dreamily responded the priest.

"Then He is your mind and my mind, is it not so?"

"Yes—"

"Then, if He is my mind, there just isn't anything good that I can't do."

Twilight does not linger in the tropics, and already the shadows that stole down through the valley had wrapped the man and child in their mystic folds. Hand in hand they turned homeward.

"Padre, if God is my mind, He will do my thinking for me. And all I have to do is to keep the door open and let His thoughts come in."

Her sweet voice lingered on the still night air. There was a pensive gladness in the man's heart as he tightly held her little hand and led her to Rosendo's door.

CHAPTER 18

THE next morning José read to Rosendo portions of the communication from Wenceslas.

"Chiquinquía," commented the latter. "I remember that Padre Diego collected much money from our people for Masses to be said at that shrine."

"But where is it, Rosendo?" asked José.

"You do not know the story?" queried Rosendo in surprise. "Why, there is not a shrine in the whole of Colombia that works so many cures as this one. Your grandfather, Don Ignacio, knew the place. And it was from him that my—that is, I learned the legend when I was only a boy. It is said that a poor, sick young girl in the little Indian village of Chiquinquía, north of Bogotá, stood praying in her shabby little cottage before an old, torn picture of the blessed Virgin." He stopped and crossed himself devoutly. Then he resumed:

"Bueno, while the girl prayed, the picture suddenly rose up in the air; the torn places all closed; the faded colors came again as fresh as ever; and the girl was cured of her affliction. The people of the village immediately built a shrine, over which they hung the picture; and ever since then the most wonderful miracles have been performed by it there."

José laughed. "You don't believe that, do you, Rosendo?" he asked in banter.

"Hombre, yes!" exclaimed the latter a bit testily. "I know

it! Did not Don Felipe go there when the doctor in Mompox told him the little white spot on his hand was leprosy? And he came back cured."

Leprosy! José started as if he had received a blow. He looked furtively at the scar on his own hand, the hand which the leper in Maganguey had lacerated that dreadful night, and which often burned and ached as if seared by a hot iron. He had never dared to voice the carking fear that tightened about his heart at times. But often in the depths of night, when dread anticipation sat like a spectre upon his bed, he had risen and gone out into the darkness to wrestle with his black thoughts. Leprosy! All the gladness and joy left his heart, and a pall of darkness settled over his thought. He turned back into his cottage and tried to find forgetfulness in the simple duties that lay at hand.

"Why is it," he asked himself, as he sat wearily down at his little table, "that I always think of evil first; while Carmen's first thought is invariably of God?"

He looked at the ugly scar on his hand. What thought was externalized in the loathsome experience which produced that? he wondered. Was it the summation of all the fear, the weakness, the wrong belief, that had filled his previous years? And now why was he finding it so difficult to practice what Carmen lived, even though he knew it was truth?

"Alas!" he murmured aloud, "it was the seminary that did it. For there my thought was educated away from the simple teachings of Jesus. To Carmen there is no mystery in godliness. Though she knows utterly nothing about Jesus, yet she hourly uses the Christ-principle. It is the children who grasp the simple truths of God; while the lack of spirituality which results from increasing years shrinks maturer minds until they no longer afford entrance to it. For godliness is broad; and the mind that receives it must be opened wide."

As he sat with his bowed head clasped in his hands, a sweet, airy voice greeted him.

"Why, Padre dear—ah, I caught you that time!—you were thinking that two and two are seven, weren't you?" She shook a rebuking finger at him.

Framed in the doorway like an old masterpiece, the sunlight bronzing her heavy brown curls, the olive-tinted skin of her bare arms and legs flushing with health, and her cheap calico gown held tightly about her, showing the contour of her full and shapely figure, the girl appeared to José like a vision from the realm of enchantment. And he knew that she did dwell in the land of spiritual enchantment, where happiness is not at the mercy of physical sense.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

"The Lord our God is a right-thinking God, and right-thinking is what He desires in His people."

José thought of this as he looked at Carmen. This barefoot girl, who walked humbly, trustingly, with her God, had she not supplied him with a working formula for his every problem, even to the casting out of the corroding fear planted in his heart by that awful experience in Maganguey? Though he had suffered much, yet much had been done for him. The brusque logic of the explorer had swept his mind clear of its last vestige of theological superstition, and prepared it for the truth which, under the benign stimulus of this clear-minded child, would remake his life, if he could now yield himself utterly to it. He must—he would—ceaselessly strive, even though he fell daily, to make his life a pattern of hers, wherein there was no knowledge of evil!

The girl came to the priest and leaned fondly against him. Then a little sigh escaped her lips, as she looked down into his face with pitying affection.

"Padre dear," she said, in a tone that echoed a strain of sadness, "I—I don't believe—you love God very much."

The man was startled, and resentment began to well in his heart. "What a thing to say, Carmen!" he answered reprovingly.

The girl looked up at him with great, wondering eyes. "But, Padre," she protested, "were you not thinking of things that are not true when I came in?"

"No—I was—I was thinking of the future—of—well, *chiquita*, I was thinking of something that might happen some day, that is all." He stumbled through it with difficulty, for he knew he must not lie to the child. Would she ever trust him again if he did?

"And, Padre, were you afraid?"

"Afraid? Yes, *chiquita*, I was." He hung his head.

Carmen looked at him reproachfully. "Then, Padre, I was right—for, if you loved God, you would trust Him—and then you couldn't be afraid of anything—could you? People who love Him are not afraid."

He turned his head away. "Ah, child," he murmured, "you will find that out in the world people don't love God in this day and generation. At least they don't love Him that way."

"They don't love Him enough to trust him?" she asked wistfully.

"No." He shook his head sadly. "Nobody trusts Him, not even the preachers themselves. When things happen, they rush for a doctor, or some other human being to help them out of their difficulty. They don't turn to Him any more. They seldom speak His name."

"Have—they—forgotten Him?" she asked slowly, her voice sinking to a whisper.

"Absolutely!" He again buried his head in his hands.

The child stood in silence for some moments. Then:

"What made them forget Him, Padre?"

"I guess, *chiquita*, they turned from Him because He didn't answer their prayers. I used to pray to Him, too. I prayed hours at a time. But nothing seemed to come of it. And so I stopped." He spoke bitterly.

"You prayed! You mean—"

"I asked Him for things—to help me out of trouble—I asked Him to give me—"

"Why, Padre! Why—that's the very reason!"

He looked up at her blankly. "What is the very reason? What are you trying to tell me, child?"

"Why, He is everywhere, and He is right here all the time. And so there couldn't be any real trouble for Him to help you out of; and He couldn't give you anything, for He has already done that, long ago. We are in Him, don't you know? Just like the little fishes in the lake. And so when you asked Him for things it showed that you didn't believe He had already given them to you. And—you know what you said last night about thinking, and that when we think things, we see them? Well, He has given you everything; but you thought He hadn't, and so you saw it that way—isn't it so?"

She paused for breath. She had talked rapidly and with animation. But before he could reply she resumed:

"Padre dear, you know you told me that Jesus was the best man that ever lived, and that it was because he never had a bad thought—isn't that so?"

"Yes," he murmured.

"Well, did he pray—did he ask God for things?"

"Of course he did, child!" the priest exclaimed. "He always asked Him for things. Why, he was always praying—the New Testament is full of it!"

Acting on a sudden impulse, he rose and went into the sleeping room to get his Bible. The child's face took on an expression of disappointment as she heard his words. Her brow knotted, and a troubled look came into her brown eyes.

José returned with his Bible and seated himself again at the table. Opening the book, his eyes fell upon a verse of

Mark's Gospel. He stopped to read it; and then read it again. Suddenly he looked up at the waiting girl.

"What is it, Padre? What does it say?"

He hesitated. He read the verse again; then he scanned the child closely, as if he would read a mystery hidden within her bodily presence. Abruptly he turned to the book and read aloud:

" 'Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' "

The girl drew a long breath, almost a sigh, as if a weight had been removed from her mind. "Did Jesus say that?" she asked in glad, eager tones.

"Yes—at least it is so reported here," he answered absently.

"Well—*he* knew, didn't he?"

"Knew what, child?"

"Why, Padre, he told the people to know—just *know*—that they already had everything—that God had given them everything good—and that if they would *know* it, they would see it."

Externalization of thought? Yes; or rather, the externalization of truth. José fell into abstraction, his eyes glued to the page. There it stood—the words almost shouted it at him! And there it had stood for nearly two thousand years, while priest and prelate, scribe and commentator had gone over it again and again through the ages, without even guessing its true meaning—without even the remotest idea of the infinite riches it held for mankind!

He turned reflectively to Matthew; and then to John. He remembered the passages well—in the past he had spent hours of mortal agony poring over them and wondering bitterly why God had failed to keep the promises they contain.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

All things—when ye ask *believing!* But that Greek word surely held vastly more than the translators have drawn from it. Nay, not believing only, but *understanding* the allness of God as good, and the consequent nothingness of evil, all that seems to oppose Him! How could the translators have so completely missed the mark! And Carmen—had never seen a Bible until he came into her life; yet she knew, knew instinctively, that a good God who was "everywhere" could not possibly withhold anything good from His children. It was the simplest kind of logic.

But, thought José again, if the promises are kept, why have we fallen so woefully short of their realization? Then he

read again, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." The promise carries a condition—abiding in his words—obeying his commands—keeping the very *first* Commandment, which is that "Ye shall have no other gods before me"—no gods of evil, sickness, chance, or death. The promises are fulfilled only on the condition of righteousness—right-thinking about God and His infinite, spiritual manifestation.

He turned to Carmen. *"Chiquita,"* he said tenderly, "you never ask God to give you things, do you?"

"Why, no, Padre; why should I? He gives me everything I need, doesn't He?"

"Yes—when you go out to the shales, you—"

"I don't ask Him for things, Padre dear. I just tell Him I *know* He is everywhere."

"I see—yes, you told me that long ago—I understand, *chiquita.*" His spirit bowed in humble reverence before such divine faith. This untutored, unlearned girl, isolated upon these burning shales, far, far from the haunts of men of pride and power and worldly lore—this barefoot child whose coffers held of material riches scarce more than the little calico dress upon her back—this lowly being knew that which all the fabled wealth of Ind could never buy! Her prayers were not the selfish pleadings that spring from narrow souls, the souls that "ask amiss"—not the frenzied yearnings wrung from suffering, ignorant hearts—nor were they the inflated instructions addressed to the Almighty by a smug, complacent clergy, the self-constituted press-bureau of infinite Wisdom. Her prayers, which so often drifted like sweetest incense about those steaming shales, were not petitions, but *affirmations.* They did not limit God. She did not plead with Him. She simply *knew* that He had already met her needs. And that righteousness—right-thinking—became externalized in her consciousness in the good she sought. Jesus did the same thing, over and over again; but the poor, stupid minds of the people were so full of wrong beliefs about his infinite Father that they could not understand, no, not even when he called Lazarus from the tomb.

"Ask in my name," urged the patient Jesus. But the poor fishermen thought he meant his human name to be a talisman, a sort of "Open Sesame," when he was striving all the time, by precept and deed, to show them that they must ask in his *character,* must be like him, to whom, though of himself he could do nothing, yet all things were possible.

José's heart began to echo the Master's words: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He put his arm about Carmen and drew her to him.

"Little one," he murmured, "how much has happened in these past few weeks!"

Carmen looked up at him with an enigmatical glance and laughed. "Well, Padre dear, I don't think anything ever really *happens,* do you?"

"Why not?" he asked.

"Mistakes happen, as in solving my algebra problems. But good things never happen, any more than the answers to my problems happen. You know, there are rules for getting the answers; but there are no rules for making mistakes—are there? But when anything comes out according to the rule, it doesn't happen. And the mistakes, which have no rules, are not real—the answers are real, but the mistakes are not—and so nothing ever really happens. Don't you see, Padre dear?"

"Surely, I see," he acquiesced. Then, while he held the girl close to him, he reflected: Good is never fortuitous. It results from the application of the Principle of all things. The answer to a mathematical problem is a form of good, and it results from the application of the principle of mathematics. Mistakes, and the various things which "happen" when we solve mathematical problems, do not have rules, or principles. They result from ignorance of them, or their misapplication. And so in life; for chance, fate, luck, accident and the merely casual, come, not from the application of principles, but from not applying them, or from ignorance of their use. The human mind or consciousness, which is a mental activity, an activity of thought, is concerned with mixed thoughts of good and evil. But *it operates without any principle whatsoever.* For, if God is infinite good, then the beliefs of evil which the human mind holds must be false beliefs, illusions, suppositions. A supposition has no principle, no rule. And so, it is only the unreal that happens. And even that sort of "happening" can be prevented by knowing and using the principle of all good, God. A knowledge of evil is not knowledge at all. Evil has no rules. Has an accident a principle? He laughed aloud at the idea.

"What is it, Padre?" asked Carmen.

"Nothing, child—and everything! But we are neglecting our work," he hastily added, as he roused himself. "What are the lessons for to-day? Come! come! We have much to do!" And arranging his papers, and bidding Carmen draw up to the table, he began the morning session of his very select little school.

* * * * * *

More than six months had elapsed since José first set foot upon the hot shales of Simití. In that time his mentality had been turned over like a fallow field beneath the plowshare.

After peace had been established in the country he had often thought to consecrate himself to the task of collecting the fragmentary ideas which had been evolved in his mind during these past weeks of strange and almost weird experience, and trying to formulate them into definite statements of truth. Then he would enter upon the task of establishing them by actual demonstration, regardless of the years that might be required to do so. He realized now that the explorer had done a great work in clearing his mind of many of its darker shadows. But it was to Carmen's purer, more spiritual influence that he knew his debt was heaviest.

Let it not seem strange that mature manhood and extensive travel had never before brought to this man's mind the truths, many of which have been current almost since the curtain first arose on the melodrama of mundane existence. Well nigh impassable limitations had been set to them by his own natal characteristics; by his acutely morbid sense of filial love which bound him, at whatever cost, to observe the bigoted, selfish wishes of his parents; and by the strictness with which his mind had been hedged about both in the seminary and in the ecclesiastical office where he subsequently labored. The first rays of mental freedom did not dawn upon his darkened thought until he was sent as an outcast to the New World. Then, when his greater latitude in Cartagena, and his still more expanded sense of freedom in Simití, had lowered the bars, there had rushed into his mentality such a flood of ideas that he was all but swept away in the swirling current.

It is not strange that he rose and fell, to-day strong in the conviction of the immanence of infinite good, to-morrow sunken in mortal despair of ever demonstrating the truth of the ideas which were swelling his shrunken mind. His line of progress in truth was an undulating curve, slowly advancing toward the distant goal to which Carmen seemed to move in a straight, undeviating line. What though Emerson had said that Mind was "the only reality of which men and all other natures are better or worse reflectors"? José was unaware of the sage's mighty deduction. What though Plato had said that we move as shadows in a world of ideas? Even if José had known of it, it had meant nothing to him. What though the Transcendentalists called the universe "a metaphore of the human mind"? José's thought was too firmly clutched by his self-centered, material beliefs to grasp it. Doubt of the reality of things material succumbed to the evidence of the physical senses and the ridicule of his seminary preceptors. True, he believed with Paul, that the ("things that are seen are temporal; the things that are unseen are eternal.") But this pregnant utterance con-

veyed nothing more to him than a belief of a material heaven to follow his exit from a world of matter. It had never occurred to him that the world of matter might be the product of those same delusive physical senses, through which he believed he gained his knowledge of it. It is true that while in the seminary, and before, he had insisted upon a more spiritual interpretation of the mission of Jesus—had insisted that Christian priests should obey the Master's injunction, and heal the sick as well as preach the gospel. But with the advent of the troubles which filled the intervening years, these things had gradually faded; and the mounting sun that dawned upon him six months before, as he lay on the damp floor of his little cell in the ecclesiastical dormitory in Cartagena, awaiting the Bishop's summons, illumined only a shell, in which agnosticism sat enthroned upon a stool of black despair.

Then Carmen entered his life. And her beautiful love, which enfolded him like a garment, and her sublime faith, which moved before him like the Bethlehem star to where the Christ-principle lay, were, little by little, dissolving the mist and revealing the majesty of the great God.

In assuming to teach the child, José early found that the outer world meant nothing to her until he had purged it of its carnal elements. Often in days past, when he had launched out upon the dramatic recital of some important historical event, wherein crime and bloodshed had shaped the incident, the girl would start hastily from her chair and put her little hand over his mouth.

"Don't, Padre dear! It is not true!" she would exclaim. "God didn't do it, and it isn't so!"

And thereby he learned to differentiate more closely between those historical events which sprang from good motives, and those which manifested only human passion, selfish ambition, and the primitive question, "Who shall be greatest?" Moreover, he had found it best in his frequent talks to the people in the church during the week to omit all reference to the evil methods of mankind in their dealings one with another, and to pass over in silence the criminal aims and low motives, and their externalization, which have marked the unfolding of the human mind, and which the world preserves in its annals as historical fact. The child seemed to divine the great truth that history is but the record of human conduct, conduct manifesting the mortal mind of man, a mind utterly opposed to the mind that is God, and therefore unreal, supposititious, and bearing the "minus" sign. Carmen would have none of it that did not reflect good. She refused utterly to turn her mental gaze toward recorded evil.

"Padre," she once protested, "when I want to see the sun rise, I don't look toward the west. And if you want to see the good come up, why do you look at these stories of bad men and their bad thoughts?"

José admitted that they were records of the mortal mind—and the mind that is mortal is *no* mind.

"I am learning," he frequently said to himself, after Carmen had left at the close of their day's work. "But my real education did not commence until I began to see, even though faintly, that the Creator is mind and infinite good, and that there is nothing real to the belief in evil; that the five physical senses give us *no* testimony of any nature whatsoever; and that real man never could, never did, fall."

Thus the days glided swiftly past, and José completed his first year amid the drowsy influences of this little town, slumbering peacefully in its sequestered nook at the feet of the green *Cordilleras*. No further event ruffled its archaic civilization; and only with rare frequency did fugitive bits of news steal in from the outer world, which, to the untraveled thought of this primitive folk, remained always a realm vague and mysterious. Quietly the people followed the routine of their colorless existence. Each morn broke softly over the limpid lake; each evening left the blush of its roseate sunset on the glassy waters; each night wound its velvety arms gently about the nodding town, while the stars beamed like jewels through the clear, soft atmosphere above, or the yellow moonbeams stole noiselessly down the old, sunken trail to dream on the lake's invisible waves.

Each month, with unvarying regularity, Rosendo came and went. At times José thought he detected traces of weariness, insidious and persistently lurking, in the old man's demeanor. At times his limbs trembled, and his step seemed heavy. Once José had found him, seated back of his cottage, rubbing the knotted muscles of his legs, and groaning aloud. But when he became aware of José presence, the groans ceased, and the old man sprang to his feet with a look of such grim determination written across his face that the priest smothered his apprehensions and forbore to speak. Rosendo was immolating himself upon his love for the child. José knew it; but he would not, if he could, prevent the sacrifice.

Each month their contributions were sent to Cartagena; and as regularly came a message from Wenceslas, admonishing them to greater efforts. With the money that was sent to the Bishop went also a smaller packet to the two women who were caring for the unfortunate Maria's little babe. The sources of José's remittances to Cartagena were never questioned by Wen-

ceslas. But Simití slowly awakened to the mysterious monthly trips of Rosendo; and Don Mario's suspicion became conviction. He bribed men to follow Rosendo secretly. They came back, footsore and angry. Rosendo had thrown them completely off the scent. Then Don Mario outfitted and sent his paid emissary after the old man. He wasted two full months in vain search along the Guamocó trail. But the fever came upon him, and he refused to continue the hunt. The Alcalde counted the cost, then loudly cursed himself and Rosendo for the many good *pesos* so ruthlessly squandered. Then he began to ply José and Rosendo with skillfully framed questions. He worried the citizens of the village with his suggestions. Finally he bethought himself to apprise the Bishop of his suspicions. But second consideration disclosed that plan as likely to yield him nothing but loss. He knew Rosendo was getting gold from some source. But, too, he was driving a good trade with the old man on supplies. He settled back upon his fat haunches at last, determined to keep his own counsel and let well-enough alone for the present, while he awaited events.

Rosendo's vivid interest in Carmen's progress was almost pathetic. When in Simití he hung over the child in rapt absorption as she worked out her problems, or recited her lessons to José. Often he shook his head in witness of his utter lack of comprehension. But Carmen understood, and that sufficed. His admiration for the priest's learning was deep and reverential. He was a silent worshiper, this great-hearted man, at the shrine of intellect; but, alas! he himself knew only the rudiments, which he had acquired by years of patient, struggling effort, through long days and nights filled with toil. His particular passion was his Castilian mother-tongue; and the precision with which he at times used it, his careful selection of words, and his wide vocabulary, occasioned José no little astonishment. One day, after returning from the hills, he approached José as the latter was hearing Carmen's lessons, and, with considerable embarrassment, offered him a bit of paper on which were written in his ample hand several verses. José read them, and then looked up wonderingly at the old man.

"Why, Rosendo, these are beautiful! Where did you get them?"

"I—they are mine, Padre," replied Rosendo, his face glowing with pleasure.

"Yours! Do you mean that you wrote them?" José queried in astonishment.

"Yes, Padre. Nights, up in Guamocó, when I had finished my work, and when I was so lonely, I would sometimes light my candle and try to write out the thoughts that came to me."

José could not keep back the tears. He turned his head, that Rosendo might not see them. Of the three little poems, two were indited to the Virgin Mary, and one to Carmen. He lingered over one of the verses of the latter, for it awoke responsive echoes in his own soul:

"Without you, the world—a desert of sadness;
But with you, sweet child—a vale of delight;
You laugh, like the sunbeam—my gloom becomes gladness;
You sing—from my heart flee the shadows of night."

"I—I have written a good deal of poetry during my life, Padre. I will show you some of it, if you wish," Rosendo advanced, encouraged by José's approbation.

"Decidedly, I would!" returned José with animation. "And to think, without instruction, without training! What a lesson!"

"Yes, Padre, when I think of the blessed Virgin or the little Carmen, my thoughts seem to come in poetry." He stooped over the girl and kissed her. The child reached up and clasped her arms about his black neck.

"Padre Rosendo," she said sweetly, "you are a poem, a big one, a beautiful one."

"Aye," seconded José, and there was a hitch in his voice, "you are an epic—and the world is the poorer that it cannot read you!"

But, though showing such laudable curiosity regarding the elements which entered into their simple life in Simití, Rosendo seldom spoke of matters pertaining to religion. Yet José knew that the old faith held him, and that he would never, on this plane of existence, break away from it. He clung to his *escapulario;* he prostrated himself before the statue of the Virgin; he invoked the aid of Virgin and Saints when in distress; and, unlike most of the male inhabitants of the town, he scrupulously prayed his rosary every night, whether at home, or on the lonely margins of the Tiguí. He had once said to José that he was glad Padre Diego had baptised the little Carmen—he felt safer to have it so. And yet he would not have her brought up in the Holy Catholic faith. Let her choose or formulate her own religious beliefs, they should not be influenced by him or others.

"You can never make me believe, Padre," he would sometimes say to the priest, "that the little Carmen was not left by the angels on the river bank."

"But, Rosendo, how foolish!" remonstrated José. "You have Escolastico's account, and the boat captain's."

"Well, and what then? Even the blessed Saviour was born

of a woman; and yet he came from heaven. The angels brought him, guarded him as he lay in the manger, protected him all his life, and then took him back to heaven again. And I tell you, Padre, the angels brought Carmen, and they are always with her!"

José ceased to dispute the old man's contentions. For, had he been pressed, he would have been forced to admit that there was in the child's pure presence a haunting spell of mystery—perhaps the mystery of godliness—but yet an undefinable *something* that always made him approach her with a feeling akin to awe.

And in the calm, untroubled seclusion of Simití, in its mediaeval atmosphere of romance, and amid its ceaseless dreams of a stirring past, the child unfolded a nature that bore the stamp of divinity, a nature that communed incessantly with her God, and that read His name in every trivial incident, in every stone and flower, in the sunbeams, the stars, and the whispering breeze. In that ancient town, crumbling into the final stages of decrepitude, she dwelt in heaven. To her, the rude adobe huts were marble castles; the shabby rawhide chairs and hard wooden beds were softest down; the coarse food was richer than a king's spiced viands; and over it all she cast a mantle of love that was rich enough, great enough, to transform with the grace of fresh and heavenly beauty the ruins and squalor of her earthly environment.

"Can a child like Carmen live a sinless life, and still be human?" José often mused, as he watched her flitting through the sunlit hours. "It is recorded that Jesus did. Ah, yes; but he was born of a virgin, spotless herself. And Carmen? Is she any less a child of God?" José often wondered, wondered deeply, as he gazed at her absorbed in her tasks. And yet—how was she born? Might he not, in the absence of definite knowledge, accept Rosendo's belief—accept it because of its beautiful, haunting mystery—that she, too, was miraculously born of a virgin, and "left by the angels on the river bank"? For, as far as he might judge, her life was sinless. It was true, she did at rare intervals display little outbursts of childish temper; she sometimes forgot and spoke sharply to her few playmates, and even to Doña Maria; and he had seen her cry for sheer vexation. And yet, these were but tiny shadows that were cast at rarest intervals, melting quickly when they came into the glorious sunlight of her radiant nature.

But the mystery shrouding the child's parentage, however he might regard it, often roused within his mind thoughts dark and apprehensive. Only one communication had come from Padre Diego, and that some four months after his precipitous

flight. He had gained the Guamocó trail, it said, and finally arrived at Remedios. He purposed returning to Banco ultimately; and, until then, must leave the little Carmen in the care of those in whom he had immovable confidence, and to whom he would some day try, however feebly, to repay in an appropriate manner his infinite debt of gratitude.

"Caramba!" muttered Rosendo, on reading the note. "Does the villain think we are fools?"

But none the less could the old man quiet the fear that haunted him, nor still the apprehension that some day Diego would make capital of his claim. What that claim might accomplish if laid before Wenceslas, he shuddered to think. And so he kept the girl at his side when in Simití, and bound José and the faithful Juan to redoubled vigilance when he was again obliged to return to the mountains.

Time passed. The care-free children of this tropic realm drowsed through the long, hot days and gossiped and danced in the soft airs of night. Rosendo held his unremitting, lonely vigil of toil in the ghastly solitudes of Guamocó. José, exiled and outcast, clung desperately to the child's hand, and strove to rise into the spiritual consciousness in which she dwelt. And thus the year fell softly into the yawning arms of the past and became a memory.

Then one day Simití awoke from its lethargy in terror, with the spectre of pestilence stalking through her narrow streets.

CHAPTER 19

FELIZ GOMEZ, who had been sent to Bodega Central for merchandise which Don Mario was awaiting from the coast, had collapsed as he stepped from his boat on his return to Simití. When he regained consciousness he called wildly for the priest.

"Padre!" he cried, when José arrived, "it is *la plaga!* Ah, *Santísima Virgen*—I am dying!—dying!" He writhed in agony on the ground.

The priest bent over him, his heart throbbing with apprehension.

"Padre—" The lad strove to raise his head. "The innkeeper at Bodega Central—he told me I might sleep in an empty house back of the inn. *Dios mío!* There was an old cot there—I slept on it two nights—*Caramba!* Padre, they told me then—Ah, *Bendita Virgen!* Don't let me die, Padre! *Carísima Virgen,* don't let me die! *Ah, Dios—!"*

His body twisted in convulsions. José lifted him and dragged him to the nearby shed where the lad had been living alone. A terror-stricken concourse gathered quickly about the doorway and peered in wide-eyed horror through the narrow window.

"Feliz, what did they tell you?" cried José, laying the sufferer upon the bed and chafing his cold hands. The boy rallied.

"They told me—a Turk, bound for Zaragoza on the Nechí river—had taken the wrong boat—in Maganguey. He had been sick—terribly sick there. *Ah, Dios!* It is coming again, Padre—the pain! *Caramba! Dios mío!* Save me, Padre, save me!"

"Jacinta! Rosa! I must have help!" cried José, turning to the stunned people. "Bring cloths—hot water—and send for Don Mario. Doña Lucia, prepare an *olla* of your herb tea at once!"

"Padre"—the boy had become quieter—"when the Turk learned that he was on the wrong boat—he asked to be put off at the next town—which was Bodega Central. The inn-keeper put him in the empty house—and he—*Dios!* he died—on that bed where I slept!"

"Well?" said José.

"Padre, he died—the day before I arrived there—and—*ah, Santísima Virgen!* they said—he died—of—of—*la cólera!*"

"Cholera!" cried the priest, starting up. At the mention of the disease a loud murmur arose from the people, and they fell back from the shed.

"Padre!—*ah, Dios*, how I suffer! Give me the sacrament—I cannot live—! Padre—let me confess—now. Ah, Padre, shall I go—to heaven? Tell me—!"

José's blood froze. He stood with eyes riveted in horror upon the tormented lad.

"Padre"—the boy's voice grew weaker—"I fell sick that day—I started for Simití—I died a thousand times in the *caño*—*ah, caramba!* But, Padre—promise to get me out of purgatory—I have no money for Masses. *Caramba!* I cannot stand it! Oh, *Dios!* Padre—quick—I have not been very wicked—but I stole—*Dios*, how I suffer!—I stole two *pesos* from the inn-keeper at Bodega Central—he thought he lost them—but I took them out of the drawer—Padre, pay him for me—then I will not go to hell! *Dios!*"

Rosendo at that moment entered the house.

"Don't come in here!" cried José, turning upon him in wild apprehension. "Keep away, for God's sake, keep away!"

In sullen silence Rosendo disregarded the priest's frenzied

appeal. His eyes widened when he saw the boy torn with convulsions, but he did not flinch. Only when he saw Carmen approaching, attracted by the great crowd, he hastily bade one of the women turn her back home.

Hour after hour the poor sufferer tossed and writhed. Again and again he lapsed into unconsciousness, from which he would emerge to piteously beg the priest to save him. *"Ah! Dios, Padre!"* he pleaded, extending his trembling arms to José, "can you do nothing? Can you not help me? *Santisima Virgen,* how I suffer!"

Then, when the evening shadows were gathering, the final convulsions seized him and wrenched his poor soul loose. José and Rosendo were alone with him when the end came. The people had early fled from the stricken lad, and were gathering in little groups before their homes and on the corners, discussing in low, strained tones the advent of the scourge. Those who had been close to the sick boy were now cold with fear. Women wept, and children clung whimpering to their skirts. The men talked excitedly in hoarse whispers, or lapsed into a state of terrified dullness.

José went from the death-bed to the Alcalde. Don Mario saw him coming, and fled into the house, securing the door after him. "Go away, Padre!" he shouted through the shutters. "For the love of the Virgin do not come here! *Caramba!"*

"But, Don Mario, the lad is dead!" cried José in desperation. "And what shall we do? We must face the situation. Come, you are the Alcalde. Let us talk about—"

"Caramba! Do what you want to! I shall get out! *Nombre de Dios!* If I live through the night I shall go to the mountains to-morrow!"

"But we must have a coffin to bury the lad! You must let us have one!"

"No! You cannot enter here, Padre!" shrilled Don Mario, jumping up and down in his excitement. "Bury him in a blanket—anything—but keep away from my house!"

José turned sadly away and passed through the deserted streets back to the lonely shed. Rosendo met him at the door. *"Bien, Padre,"* he said quietly, "we are exiled."

"Have you been home yet?" asked José.

"Hombre, no! I cannot go home now. I might carry the disease to the señora and the little Carmen. I must stay here. And," he added, "you too, Padre."

José's heart turned to lead. "But, the boy?" he exclaimed, pointing toward the bed.

"When it is dark, Padre," replied Rosendo, "we will take him out through the back door and bury him beyond the shales. *Hombre!* I must see now if I can find a shovel."

José sank down upon the threshold, a prey to corroding despair, while Rosendo went out in search of the implement. The streets were dead, and few lights shone from the latticed windows. The pall of fear had settled thick upon the stricken town. Those who were standing before their houses as Rosendo approached hastily turned in and closed their doors. José, in the presence of death in a terrible form, sat mute. In an hour Rosendo returned.

"No shovel, Padre," he announced. "But I crept up back of my house and got this bar which I had left standing there when I came back from the mountains. I can scrape up the loose earth with my hands. Come now."

José wearily rose. He was but a tool in the hands of a man to whom physical danger was but a matter of temperament. He absently helped Rosendo wrap the black, distorted corpse in the frayed blanket; and then together they passed out into the night with their grewsome burden.

"Why not to the cemetery, Rosendo?" asked José, as the old man took an opposite course.

"*Hombre,* no!" cried Rosendo. "The cemetery is on shale, and I could not dig through it in time. We must get the body under ground at once. *Caramba!* If we put it in one of the *bóvedas* in the cemetery the buzzards will eat it and scatter the plague all over the town. The *bóvedas* are broken, and have no longer any doors, you remember."

So beyond the shales they went, stumbling through the darkness, their minds freighted with a burden of apprehension more terrible than the thing they bore in their arms. The shales crossed, Rosendo left the trail, cutting a way through the bush with his *machete* a distance of several hundred feet. Then, by the weird yellow light of a single candle, he opened the moist earth and laid the hideous, twisted thing within. José watched the procedure in dull apathy.

"And now, Padre," said Rosendo, at length breaking the awful silence, "where will you sleep to-night? I cannot let you go back to your house. It is too near the señora and Carmen. No man in town will let you stay in his house, since you have handled the plague. Will you sleep in the shed where the lad died? Or out on the shales with me? I called to the señora when I went after the bar, and she will lay two blankets out in the *plaza* for us. And in the morning she will put food where we can get it. What say you?"

José stood dazed. His mind had congealed with the horror of the situation. Rosendo took him by the arm. "Come, Padre," he said gently. "The hill up back of the second church is high, and no one lives near. I will get the blankets and we will pass the night out there."

"But, Rosendo!" José found his voice. "What is it? Is it—*la cólera?*"

"Quien sabe? Padre," returned Rosendo. "There has been plague here—these people, some of them, still remember it—but it was long ago. There have been cases along the river—and brought, I doubt not, by Turks, like this one."

"And do you think that it is now all along the river? That Bodega Central is being ravaged by the scourge? That it will sweep through the country?"

"Quien sabe? Padre. All I do know is that the people of Simití are terribly frightened, and the pestilence may wipe away the town before it leaves."

"But—good God! what can we do, Rosendo?"

"Nothing, Padre—but stay and meet it," the man replied quietly.

They reached the hill in silence. Then Rosendo wrapped himself in one of the blankets which he had picked up as he passed through the *plaza,* and lay down upon the shale.

But José slept not that night. The warm, sluggish air lay about him, mephitic in its touch. The great vampire bats that soughed through it symbolized the "pestilence that walketh in darkness." Lonely calls drifted across the warm lake waters from the dripping jungle like the hollow echoes of lost souls. Rosendo tossed fitfully, and now and then uttered deep groans. The atmosphere was prescient with horror. He struggled to his feet and paced gloomily back and forth along the brow of the hill. The second church stood near, deserted, gloomy, no longer a temple of God, but a charnel house of fear and black superstition. In the distance the ghostly white walls of the Rincón church glowed faintly in the feeble light that dripped from the yellow stars. There was now no thought of God—no thought of divine aid. José was riding again the mountainous billows of fear and unbelief; nor did he look for the Master to come to him through the thick night across the heaving waters.

The tardy dawn brought Doña Maria to the foot of the hill, where she deposited food, and held distant converse with the exiles. Don Mario had just departed, taking the direction across the lake toward San Lucas. He had compelled his wife to remain in Simití to watch over the little store, while he fled with two boatmen and abundant supplies. Others likewise were preparing to flee, some to the Boque river, some up the Guamocó trail. Doña Maria was keeping Carmen closely, nor would she permit her to as much as venture from the house.

"Why should not the señora take Carmen and go to Boque, Rosendo?" asked José. "Then you and I could occupy our own houses until we knew what the future had in store for us."

Rosendo agreed at once. Carmen would be safe in the protecting care of Don Nicolás. Doña Maria yielded only after much persuasion. From the hilltop José could descry the Alcalde's boat slowly wending its way across the lake toward the Juncal. Rosendo, having finished his morning meal, prepared to meet the day.

"Bien, Padre," he said, "when the sun gets high we cannot stay here. We must seek shade—but where?" He looked about dubiously.

"Why not in the old church, Rosendo?"

"Caramba, never!" cried Rosendo. *"Hombre!* that old church is haunted!"

José could never understand the nature of this man, so brave in the face of physical danger, yet so permeated with superstitious dread of those imaginary inhabitants of the invisible realm.

"Padre," suggested Rosendo at length. "We will go down there, nearer the lake, to the old shack where the blacksmith had his forge. He died two years ago, and the place has since been empty."

"Go then, Rosendo, and I will follow later," assented José, who now craved solitude for the struggle for self-mastery which he saw impending.

While Rosendo moved off toward the deserted shack, the priest continued his restless pacing along the crest of the hill. The morning was glorious—but for the blighting thoughts of men. The vivid green of the dewy hills shone like new-laid color. The lake lay like a diamond set in emeralds. The dead town glowed brilliantly white in the mounting sun. José knew that the heat would soon drive him from the hill. He glanced questioningly at the old church. He walked toward it; then mounted the broken steps. The hinges, rusted and broken, had let the heavy door, now bored through and through by *comjejen* ants, slip to one side. Through the opening thus afforded, José could peer into the cavernous blackness within. The sun shot its terrific heat at him, and the stone steps burned his sandaled feet. He pushed against the door. It yielded. Then through the opening he entered the dusty, ill-smelling old edifice.

When his eyes had become accustomed to the dimness within, he saw that the interior was like that of the other church, only in a more dilapidated state. There were but few benches; and the brick altar, poorer in construction, had crumbled away at one side. Dust, mold, and cobwebs covered everything; but the air was gratefully cool. José brushed the

thick dust from one of the benches. Then he lay down upon it, and was soon sunk in heavy sleep.

* * * * * *

The sun had just crossed the meridian. José awoke, conscious that he was not alone. The weird legend that hung about the old church filtered slowly through his dazed brain. Rosendo had said that an angel of some kind dwelt in the place. And surely a presence sat on the bench in the twilight before him! He roused up, rubbed his sleepy eyes, and peered at it. A soft laugh echoed through the stillness.

"I looked all around for the bad angel that padre Rosendo said lived here, and I didn't find anything but you."

"Carmen, child! What are you doing here? Don't come near me!" cried José, drawing away.

"Why, Padre—what is it? Why must I keep away from you? First, madre Maria tells me I must go to Boque with her. And now you will not let me come near you. And I love you so—" Tears choked her voice, and she sat looking in mute appeal at the priest.

José's wit seemed hopelessly scattered. He passed his hand dully across his brow as if to brush the mist from his befogged brain.

"Padre dear." The pathetic little voice wrung his heart. "Padre dear, when madre Maria told me I had to go to Boque, I went to your house to ask you, and—and you weren't there. And I couldn't find padre Rosendo either—and there wasn't anybody in the streets at all—and I came up here. Then I saw the blanket out on the hill, and I kept hunting for you—I wanted to see you *so* much. And when I saw the door of the church broken, I thought you might be in here—and so I came in—and, oh, Padre dear, I was *so* glad to find you—but I wouldn't wake you up—and while you were sleeping I just *knew* that God was taking care of you all the time—"

José had sunk again upon the bench.

"Padre dear!" Carmen came flying to him across the darkness and threw her arms about his neck. "Padre dear! I just couldn't stand it to leave you!" The flood-gates opened wide, and the girl sobbed upon his shoulder.

"Carmen—child!" But his own tears were mingling freely with hers. The strain of the preceding night had left him weak. He strove feebly to loosen the tightly clasped arms of the weeping girl. Then he buried his drawn face in her thick curls and strained her to his heaving breast. What this might mean to Carmen he knew full well. But—why not have it so? If she preceded him into the dark vale, it would be for only a little while. He would not live without her.

The sobs died away, and the girl looked up at the suffering man.

"Padre dear, you will not send me away—will you?" she pleaded.

"No! no!" he cried fiercely, "not now!"

A happy little sigh escaped her lips. Then she drew herself closer to him and whispered softly, "Padre dear—I love you."

A groan burst from the man. "God above!" he cried, "have you the heart to let evil attack such a one as this!"

The girl looked up at him in wonder. "Why, Padre dear—what is it? Tell me."

"Nothing, child—nothing! Did—er—did your madre Maria say why you must go to Boque?" he asked hesitatingly.

"She said Feliz Gomez died last night of the plague, and that the people were afraid they would all get sick and die too. And she said—Padre dear, she said you were afraid I would get sick, and so you told her to take me away. You didn't mean that, did you? She didn't understand you, did she? You are not afraid, are you? You can't be, you know, can you? You and I are not afraid of anything. We *know*—don't we, Padre dear?"

"What do we know, child?" he asked sadly.

"Why—why, we know that God is *everywhere!*" She looked at him wonderingly. What could she understand of a nature so wavering?—firm when the sun shone bright above—tottering when the blasts of adversity whirled about it? He had said such beautiful things to her, such wonderful things about God and His children only yesterday. And now—why this awful change? Why again this sudden lowering of standards?

He had sunk deep into his dark thoughts. "Death is inevitable!" he muttered grimly, forgetful of the child's presence.

"Oh, Padre dear!" she pleaded, passing her little hand tenderly over his cheek. Then her face brightened. "I know what it is!" she exclaimed. "You are just trying to think that two and two are seven—and you can't prove it—and so you'd better stop trying!" She broke into a little forced laugh.

José sat wrapped in black silence.

"Padre dear." Her voice was full of plaintive tenderness. "You have talked so much about that good man Jesus. What would he say if he saw you trying to make two and two equal seven? And if he had been here last night—would he have let Feliz die?"

The priest made no answer. None was required when Carmen put her questions.

"Padre dear," she continued softly. "Why didn't *you* cure Feliz?"

His soul withered under the shock.

"You have told me, often, that Jesus cured sick people. And you said he even made the dead ones live again—didn't you, Padre dear?"

"Yes," he murmured; "they say he did."

"And you read to me once from your Bible where he told the people that he gave them power over everything. And you said he was the great rule—you called him the Christ-principle—and you said he never went away from us. Well, Padre dear," she concluded with quick emphasis, "why don't you use him now?"

She waited a moment. Then, when no reply came—

"Feliz didn't die, Padre."

"*Hombre!* It's all the same—he's gone!" he cried in a tone of sullen bitterness.

"You think he is gone, Padre dear. And Feliz thought he had to go. And so now you both see it that way—that's all. If you would see things the way that good man Jesus told you to—well, wouldn't they be different—wouldn't they, Padre dear?"

"No doubt they would, child, no doubt. But—"

She waited a moment for him to express the limitation which the conjunctive implied. Then:

"Padre dear, how do you think he did it? How did he cure sick people, and make the dead ones live again?"

"I—I don't know, child—I am not sure. That knowledge has been lost, long since."

"You *do* know, Padre," she insisted; "you *do!* Did he know that God was everywhere?"

"Yes."

"And what did he say sickness was?"

"He classed it with all evil under the one heading—a lie—a lie about God."

"But when a person tells a lie, he doesn't speak the truth, does he?"

"No."

"And a lie has no rule, no principle?"

"No."

"And so it isn't anything—doesn't come from anything true—hasn't any real life, has it?"

"No, a lie is utterly unreal, not founded on anything but supposition, either ignorant or malicious."

"Then Jesus said sickness was a supposition, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"And God, who made everything real, didn't make suppositions. He made only real things."

"True, child."

"Well, Padre dear, if you *know* all that, why don't you act as if you did?"

Act? Yes, act your knowledge! Acknowledge Him in all your ways! Then He shall bring it to pass! What? That which is real—life, not death—immortality, not oblivion—love, not hate—good, not evil!

"*Chiquita—*" His voice was thick. "You—you believe all that, don't you?"

"No, Padre dear"—she smiled up at him through the darkness—"I don't believe it, I *know* it."

"But—how—how do you know it?"

"God tells me, Padre. I hear Him, always. And I prove it every day. The trouble is, you believe it, but I don't think you ever try to *prove* it. If you believed my problems in algebra could be solved, but never tried to prove it—well, you wouldn't do very much in algebra, would you?" She laughed at the apt comparison.

José's straining eyes were peering straight ahead. Through the thick gloom he saw the mutilated figure of the Christ hanging on its cross beside the crumbling altar. It reflected the broken image of the Christ-principle in the hearts of men. And was he not again crucifying the gentle Christ? Did not the world daily crucify him and nail him with their false beliefs to the cross of carnal error which they set up in the Golgotha of their own souls? And were they not daily paying the awful penalty therefor? Aye, paying it in agony, in torturing agony of soul and body, in blasted hopes, crumbling ambitions, and inevitable death!

"Padre dear, what did the good man say sickness came from?" Carmen's soft voice brought him back from his reflections.

"Sickness? Why, he always coupled disease with sin."

"And sin?"

"Sin is—is unrighteousness."

"And that is—?" she pursued relentlessly.

"Wrong conduct, based on wrong thinking. And wrong thinking is based on wrong beliefs, false thought."

"But to believe that there is anything but God, and the things He made, is sin, isn't it, Padre dear?"

"Sin is—yes, to believe in other powers than God is to break the very first Commandment—and that is the chief of sins!"

"Well, Padre dear, can't you make yourself think right? Do you know what you really think about God, anyway?"

José rose and paced up and down through the dark aisle.

"I try to think," he answered, "that He is mind; that He is infinite, everywhere; that He is all-powerful; that He knows all things; and that He is perfect and good. I try not to think that He made evil, or anything that is or could be bad, or that could become sick, or decay, or die. Whatever He made must be real, and real things last forever, are immortal, eternal. I strive to think He did make man in His image and likeness—and that man has never been anything else—that man never 'fell.'"

"What is that, Padre?"

"Only an old, outworn theological belief. But, to resume: I believe that, since God is mind, man must be an idea of His. Since God is infinite, man must exist in Him. I know that any number of lies can be made up about true things. And any number of falsities can be assumed about God and what He has made. I am sure that the material universe and man are a part of the lie about God and the way He manifests and expresses Himself in and through His ideas. Everything is mental. We *must* hold to that! The mental realm includes all truth, all fact. But there may be all sorts of supposition about this fact. And yet, while fact is based upon absolute and undeviating principle—and I believe that principle to be God—supposition is utterly without any rule or principle whatsoever. It is wholly subject to truth, to Principle, to God. Hence, bad or wrong thought is absolutely subject to good or real thought, and must go down before it. The mortal man is a product of wrong thought. He is a supposition; and so is the universe of matter in which he is supposed to live. We have already learned that the things he thinks he hears, feels, tastes, smells, and sees are only his own thoughts. And these turn out to be suppositions. Hence, they are nothing real."

"Well, Padre! How fast you talk! And—such big words! I—I don't think I understand all you say. But, anyway, I guess it is right." She laughed again.

"I *know* it is right!" he exclaimed, forgetting that he was talking to a child. "Evil, which includes sickness and death, is only a false idea of good. It is a misinterpretation, made in the thought-activity which constitutes what we call the human consciousness. And that is the opposite—the suppositional opposite—of the mind that is God. Evil, then, becomes a supposition—and a lie. Just what Jesus said it was!"

"But, Padre—I don't see why you don't act as if you really believed all that!"

"Fear—only fear! It has not yet been eradicated from my thought," he answered slowly.

"But, Padre, what will drive it out?"

"Love, child—love only, for 'perfect love casteth out fear.'"

"Oh, then, Padre dear, I will just love it all out of you, every bit!" she exclaimed, clasping her arms about him again and burying her face in his shoulder.

"Ah, little one," he said sadly, "I must love more. I must love my fellow-men and good more than myself and evil. If I didn't love myself so much, I would have no fear. If I loved God as you do, dearest child, I would never come under fear's heavy shadow."

"You *do* love everybody—you have got to, for you are God's child. And now," she added, getting down and drawing him toward the door, "let us go out of this smelly old church. I want you to come home. We've got to have our lessons, you know."

"But—child, the people will not let me come near them—nor you either, now," he said, holding back. "They think we may give them the disease."

She looked up at him with a tender, wistful smile. Then she shook her head. "Padre dear, I love you," she said, "but you make me lots of trouble. But—we are going to love all the fear away, and—" stamping her little bare foot— "we are going to get the right answer to your problem, too!"

The priest took her hand, and together they passed out into the dazzling sunlight.

On the brow of the hill stood Rosendo, talking excitedly, and with much vehement gesticulation, to Doña Maria, who remained a safe distance from him. The latter and her good consort exclaimed in horror when they saw Carmen with the priest.

"Caramba!" cried Rosendo, darting toward them. "I could kill you for this, Padre! *Hombre!* How came the child here, and with you? *Dios mío!* Have you no heart, but that, when you know you may die, you would take her with you?" He swung his long arms menacingly before the priest, and his face worked with passion.

The girl ran between the two men. "Padre Rosendo!" she cried, seizing one of his hands in both of her own. "I came of myself. He did not call me. I found him asleep. And he isn't going to die—nor I, either!"

Doña Maria approached and quietly joined the little group.

"Caramba! Go back!" cried the distressed Rosendo, turning upon her. *"Hombre! Dios y diablo!* will you all die?" He stamped the ground and tore his hair in his impotent protest.

"*Na,* Rosendo," said the woman placidly, "if you are in

danger, I will be too. If you must die, so will I. I will not be left alone."

A thrill of admiration swept over the priest. Then he smiled wanly. *"Bien,"* he said, "we have all been exposed to the plague now, and we will stand together. Shall we return home?"

Rosendo's anger soon evaporated, but his face retained traces of deep anxiety. "Maria tells me, Padre," he said, "that Amado Sanchez fell sick last night with the flux, and nobody will stay with him, excepting his woman."

"Let us go to him, then," replied the priest. "Doña Maria, do you and Carmen return to your house, whilst Rosendo and I seek to be of service to those who may need us."

Together they started down the main street of the town. Dead silence reigned everywhere. Many of the inhabitants had fled to the hills. But there were still many whose circumstances would not permit of flight. As they neared Rosendo's house the little party were hailed from a distance by Juan Mendoza and Pedro Cárdenas, neighbors living on either side of Rosendo and the priest.

"Hola, Padre and Don Rosendo!" they called; "you cannot return to your homes, for you would expose us to the plague! Go back! Go back! We will burn the houses over your heads if you return!"

"But, *amigos—"* José began.

"Na, Padre," they cried in tense excitement, "it is for the best! Go back to the hill! We will supply you with food and blankets—but you must not come here! Amado Sanchez is sick; Guillermo Hernandez is sick. Go back! You must not expose us!" The attitude of the frightened, desperate men was threatening. José saw that it would be unwise to resist them.

"Bien, compadres, we will go," he said, his heart breaking with sorrow for these children of fear. Then, assembling his little family, he turned and retraced his steps sadly through the street that burned in lonely silence in the torrid heat.

Carmen's eyes were big with wonder; but a happy idea soon drove all apprehension from her thought. "Padre!" she exclaimed, "we will live in the old church, and we will play house there!" She clapped her hands in merriment.

"Never!" muttered Rosendo. "I will not enter that place! It would bring the plague upon me! *Na! na!"* he insisted, when they reached the steps, "do you go in if you wish; but I will stay outside in the shadow of the building." Nor would the combined entreaties of Carmen and José induce him to yield. Doña Maria calmly and silently prepared to remain with him.

"Pull off the old door, Padre!" cried Carmen excitedly. "And open all the shutters. Look! Look, Padre! There goes the bad angel that padre Rosendo was afraid of!" A number of bats, startled at the noise and the sudden influx of light, were scurrying out through the open door.

"Like the legion of demons which Jesus sent into the swine," said José. "I will tell you the story some day, *chiquita,*" he said, in answer to her look of inquiry.

The day passed quickly for the child, nor did she seem to cast another thought in the direction of the cloud which hung over the sorrowing town. At dusk, Mendoza and Cárdenas came to the foot of the hill with food and blankets.

"Amado Sanchez has just died," they reported.

"What!" cried José. "So soon? Why—he fell sick only yesterday!"

"No, Padre, he had been ailing for many days—but it may have been the plague just the same. Perhaps it was with us before Feliz brought it. But we have not exposed ourselves to the disease and—Padre—there is not a man in Simití who will bury Amado. What shall we do?"

José divined the man's thought. "*Bien, amigo,*" he replied. "Go you back to your homes. To-night Rosendo and I will come and bury him."

José had sent Carmen and Doña Maria beyond the church, that they might not hear the grewsome tidings. When the men had returned to their homes, the little band on the hilltop ate their evening meal in silence. Then a bench was swept clean for Carmen's bed, for she insisted on sleeping in the old church with José when she learned that he intended to pass the night there.

Again, as the heavy shadows were gathering, José and Rosendo descended into the town and bore out the body of Amado Sanchez to a resting place beside the poor lad who had died the day before. To a man of such delicate sensibilities as José, whose nerves were raw from continual friction with a world with which he was ever at variance, this task was one of almost unendurable horror. He returned to the old church in a state bordering on collapse.

"Rosendo," he murmured, as they seated themselves on the hillside in the still night, "I think we shall all die of the plague. And it were well so. I am tired, utterly tired of striving to live against such odds. *Bien,* let it come!"

"Courage, *compadre!*" urged Rosendo, putting his great arm about the priest's shoulders. "We must all go some time, and perhaps now; but while we live let us live like men!"

"You do not fear death?"

"No—what is it that the old history of mine says? 'Death is not departing, but arriving.' I am not afraid. But the little Carmen—I wish that she might live. She—ah, Padre, she could do much good in the world. *Bien*, we are all in the hands of the One who brought us here—and He will take us in the way and at the time that He appoints—is it not so, Padre?"

José lapsed again into meditation. No, he could not say that it was so. The thoughts which he had expressed to Carmen that morning still flitted through his mind. The child was right—Rosendo's philosophy was that of resignation born of ignorance. It was the despair of doubt. And he did not really think that Carmen would be smitten of the plague. Something seemed to tell him that it was impossible. But, on the other hand, he would himself observe every precaution in regard to her. No, he would not sleep in the church that night. He had handled the body of the plague's second victim, and he could not rest near the child. Perhaps exposure to the night air and the heavy dews would serve to cleanse him. And so he wrapped himself in the blanket which Doña Maria brought from within the church, and lay down beside the faithful pair.

In the long hours of that lonely night José lay beneath the shimmering stars pondering, wondering. Down below in the smitten town the poor children of his flock were eating their hearts out in anxious dread and bitter sorrow. Was it through any fault of theirs that this thing had come upon them, like a bolt from a cloudless sky? No—except that they were human, mortal. And if the thing were real, it came from the mind that is God; if unreal—but it seemed real to these simple folk, terribly so!

His heart yearned toward them as his thought penetrated the still reaches of the night and hovered about their lonely vigil. Yet, what had he to offer? What balm could he extend to those wearing out weary hours on beds of agony below? Religion? True religion, if they could but understand it; but not again the empty husks of the faith that had been taught them in the name of Christ! Where did scholastic theology stand in such an hour as this? Did it offer easement from their torture of mind and body? No. Strength to bear in patience their heavy burden? No. Hope? Not of this life—nay, naught but the thread-worn, undemonstrable promise of a life to come, if, indeed, they might happily avoid the pangs of purgatory and the horrors of the quenchless flames of hell! God, what had not the Church to answer for!

And yet, these ignorant children were but succumbing to the evidence of their material senses—though small good it would do to tell them so! Could they but know—as did Car-

men—that rejection of error and reception of truth meant life—ah, could they but know! Could he himself but know—really *know*—that God is neither the producer of evil, nor the powerless witness of its ravages—could he but understand and prove that evil is not a self-existing entity, warring eternally with God, what might he not accomplish! For Jesus had said: "These signs"—the cure of disease, the rout of death—"shall follow them that believe," that understand, that know. Why could he not go down to those beds of torture and say with the Christ: "Arise, for God hath made thee whole"? He knew why—"without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh of God must believe"—must *know*—"that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The suffering victims in the town below were asleep in a state of religious dullness. The task of independent thinking was onerous to such as they. Gladly did they leave it to the Church to do their thinking for them. And thus did they suffer for the trust betrayed!

But truth is omnipotent, and "one with God is a majority." Jesus gave few rules, but none more fundamental than that "with God all things are possible." Was he, José, walking with God? If so, he might arise and go down into the stricken town and bid its frightened children be whole. If he fully recognized "the Father" as all-powerful, all-good, and if he could clearly see and retain his grasp on the truth that evil, the supposititious opposite of good, had neither place nor power, except in the minds of mortals receptive to it—ah, then —then—

A soft patter of little feet on the shales broke in upon his thought. He turned and beheld Carmen coming through the night.

"Padre dear," she whispered, "why didn't you come and sleep in the church with me?" She crept close to him. He had not the heart nor the courage to send her away. He put out his arm and drew her to him.

"Padre dear," the child murmured, "it is nice out here under the stars—and I want to be with you—I love you—love you—" The whisper died away, and the child slept on his arm.

"Perfect love casteth out fear."

CHAPTER 20

DAWN brought Juan Mendoza and Pedro Cárdenas again to the hill, and with them came others. "Mateo Gil, Pablo Polo, and Juanita Gomez are sick, Padre," announced Mendoza, the spokesman. "They ask for the last sacrament. You could come down and give it to them, and then return to the hill, is it not so?"

"Yes," assented José, "I will come."

"And, Padre," continued Mendoza, "we talked it over last night, after Amado Sanchez died, and we think it would help if you said a Mass for us in the church to-day."

"I will do so this afternoon, after I have visited the sick," he replied pityingly.

Mendoza hesitated. Then—

"We think, too, Padre, that if we held a procession—in honor of Santa Barbara—perhaps she would pray for us, and might stop the sickness. We could march through the town this evening, while you stood here and prayed as we passed around the hill. What say you, Padre?"

José was about to express a vehement protest. But the anxious faces directed toward him melted his heart.

"Yes, children," he replied gently, "do as you wish. Keep your houses this afternoon while I visit the sick and offer the Mass. I will leave the *hostia* on the altar. You need not fear to touch it. Carry it with you in your rogation to Santa Barbara this evening, and I will stand here and pray for you."

The people departed, sorrowing, but grateful. Hope revived in the breasts of some. But most of them awaited in trembling the icy touch of the plague.

"Padre," said Rosendo, when the people had gone. "I have been thinking about the sickness, and I remember what my father told me he learned from a Jesuit missionary. It was that the fat from a human body would cure rheumatism. And then the missionary laughed and said that the fat from a plump woman would cure all diseases of mind and body. If that is so, Padre, and Juanita Gomez dies—she is very plump, Padre—could we not take some of the fat from her body and rub it on the sick—"

"God above, Rosendo! what are you saying!" cried José recoiling in horror.

"*Caramba!*" retorted the honest man. "Would you not try everything that might possibly save these people? What the missionary said may be true."

"No, my faithful ally," replied José. "You did not get the sense in which he said it. Neither human fat nor medicine of any kind will help these people. Nothing will be accomplished for them until their fear has been removed. For, I—well, the symptoms manifested by poor Feliz may have been those of Asiatic cholera. But—I begin to doubt. And as for Sanchez —*Bien,* we do not know—not for certain." He stopped and pondered the question.

"Padre," pursued Rosendo, "I have used the liver of a lizard for toothache, and it was very good."

"I have no doubt of it, Rosendo," replied José, with a smile. "And in days past stranger remedies than that were used by supposedly wise people. When the eyesight was poor, they rubbed wax from the human ear upon the eyes, and I doubt not marvelous restorations of sight were made. So also dogs' teeth were ground into powder and taken to alleviate certain bodily pains. Almost everything that could be swallowed has been taken by mankind to cure their aches and torments. But they still ache to-day; and will continue to do so, I believe, until their present state of mind greatly changes."

When the simple midday meal of corn *arepa* and black coffee was finished, José descended into the quiet town. "It is absurd that we should be kept on the hill," he had said to Rosendo, "but these dull, simple minds believe that, having handled those dead of the plague, we have become agents of infection. They forget that they themselves are living either in the same house with it, or closely adjacent. But it humors them, poor children, and we will stay here for their sakes."

"*Caramba!* and they have made us their sextons!" muttered Rosendo.

José shuddered. The clammy hand of fear again reached for his heart. He turned to Carmen, who was busily occupied in the shade of the old church.

"Your lessons, *chiquita?*" he queried, going to her for a moment's abstraction.

"No, Padre dear," she replied, smiling up at him, while she quickly concealed the bit of paper on which she had been writing.

"Then what are you doing, little one?" he insisted.

"Padre dear—don't—don't always make me tell you everything," she pleaded, but only half in earnest, as she cast an enigmatical glance at him.

"But this time I insist on knowing; so you might as well tell me."

"Well then, if you must know," she replied, her face beaming with a happiness which seemed to José strangely out of

place in that tense atmosphere, "I have been writing a question to God." She held out the paper.

"Writing a question to God! Well—!"

"Why, yes, Padre dear. I have done that for a long, long time. When I want to know what to do, and think I don't see just what is best, I write my question to God on a piece of paper. Then I read it to Him, and tell Him I know He knows the answer and that He will tell me. And then I put the paper under a stone some place, and—well, that's all, Padre. Isn't it a good way?" She beamed at him like a glorious noonday sun.

The priest stood before her in wonder and admiration. "And does He tell you the answers to your questions, *chiquita?*" he asked tenderly.

"Always, Padre dear. Not always right away—but He never fails—never!"

"Will you tell me what you are asking Him now?" he said.

She handed him the paper. His eyes dimmed as he read:

"Dear, dear Father, please tell your little girl and her dear Padre José what it is that makes the people think they have to die down in the town."

"And where will you put the paper, little girl?" he asked, striving to control his voice.

"Why, I don't know, Padre. Oh, why not put it under the altar in this old church?" she exclaimed, pleased with the thought of such a novel hiding place.

"Excellent!" assented José; and together they entered the building. After much stumbling over rubbish, much soiling of hands and disturbing of bats and lizards, while Carmen's happy laugh rang merrily through the gloomy old pile, they laid the paper carefully away behind the altar in a little pocket, and covered it with an adobe brick.

"There!" panted the girl, the task finished. "Now we will wait for the answer."

José went down into the ominous silence of the town with a lighter heart. The sublime faith of the child moved before him like a beacon. To the sick he spoke words of comfort, with the vision of Carmen always before him. At the altar in the empty church, where he offered the Mass in fulfillment of his promise to the people, her fair form glowed with heavenly radiance from the pedestal where before had stood the dilapidated image of the Virgin. He prepared the sacred wafer and left a part of it on the altar for the people to carry in their procession to Santa Barbara. The other portion he took to the sick ones who had asked for the sacrament.

Two more had fallen ill that afternoon. Mateo Gil, he

thought, could not live the night through. He knelt at the loathsome bedside of the suffering man and prayed long and earnestly for light. He tried not to ask, but to know. While there, he heard a call from the street, announcing the passing of Guillermo Hernandez. Another one! His heart sank again. The plague was upon them in all its cruel virulence.

Sadly he returned to the hill, just as the sun tipped the highest peaks of the *Cordilleras*. Standing on the crest, he waited with heavy heart, while the mournful little procession wended its sad way through the streets below. An old, battered wooden image of one of the Saints, rescued from the oblivion of the *sacristia*, had been dressed to represent Santa Barbara. This, bedecked with bits of bright colored ribbon, was carried at the head of the procession by the faithful Juan. Following him, Pedro Gonzales, old and tottering, bore a dinner plate, on which rested the *hostia*, while over the wafer a tall young lad held a soiled umbrella, for there was no canopy.

A slow chant rose from the lips of the people like a dirge. It struck the heart of the priest like a chill wind. *"Ora pro nobis! Ora pro nobis!"* Tears streamed from his eyes while he gazed upon his stricken people. Slowly, wearily, they wound around the base of the hill, some sullen with despair, others with eyes turned beseechingly upward to where the priest of God stood with outstretched hands, his full heart pouring forth a passionate appeal to Him to turn His light upon these simple-minded children. When they had gone back down the road, their bare feet raising a cloud of thick dust which hid them from his view, José sank down upon the rock and buried his face in his hands.

"I know—I think I know, oh, God," he murmured; "but as yet I have not proved—not yet. But grant that I may soon —for their sakes."

Rosendo touched his shoulder. "There is another body to bury to-night, Padre. Eat now, and we will go down."

* * * * * *

Standing over the new grave, in the solemn hush of night, the priest murmured: "I am the resurrection and the life." But the mound upon which Rosendo was stolidly heaping the loose earth marked only another victory of the mortal law of death over a human sense of life. And there was no one there to call forth the sleeping man.

"Behold, I give you power over all things," said the marvelous Jesus. The wondrous, irresistible power which he exerted in behalf of suffering humanity, he left with the world when he went away. But where is it now?

"Still here," sighed the sorrowing priest, "still here—lo,

always here—but we know it not. Sunken in materiality, and enslaved to the false testimony of the physical senses, we lack the spirituality that alone would enable us to grasp and use that Christ-power, which is the resurrection and the life."

"Padre," said Rosendo, when they turned back toward the hill, "Hernandez is now with the angels. You gave him the sacrament, did you not?"

"Yes, Rosendo."

"Bien, then you remitted his sins, and he is doubtless in paradise. But," he mused, "it may be that he had first to pass through purgatory. *Caramba!* I like not the thought of those hot fires!"

"Rosendo!" exclaimed José in impatience. "Your mental wanderings at times are puerile! You talk like the veriest child! Do not be deceived, Hernandez is still the same man, even though he has left his earthly body behind. Do not think he has been lifted at once into eternal bliss. The Church has taught such rubbish for ages, and has based its pernicious teachings upon the grossly misunderstood words of Jesus. The Church is a failure—a dead, dead failure, in every sense of the word! And that man lying there in his grave is a ghastly proof of it!"

Rosendo looked wonderingly at the excited priest, whose bitter words rang out so harshly on the still night air.

"The Church has failed utterly to preserve the simple gospel of the Christ! It has basely, wantonly betrayed its traditional trust! It has fought and slain and burned for centuries over trivial, vulnerable non-essentials, and thrown its greatest pearls to the swine! It no longer prophesies; it carps and reviles! It no longer heals the sick; but it conducts a purgatorial lottery at so much a head! It has become a jumble of idle words, a mumbling of silly formulae, a category of stupid, insensate ceremonies! Its children are taught to derive their faith from such legends as that of the holy Saint Francis, who, to convince a heretic, showed the *hostia* to an ass, which on beholding the sacred dough immediately kneeled! Good God!"

"Ca-ram-ba! But you speak hard words, Padre!" muttered Rosendo, vague speculations flitting through his brain as to the priest's mental state.

"God!" continued José heatedly, "the Church has fought truth desperately ever since the Master's day! It has fawned at the feet of emperor and plutocrat, and licked the bloody hand of the usurer who tossed her a pittance of his foul gains! In the great world-battles for reform, for the rights of man, for freedom from the slavery of man to man or to drink and

drugs, she has come up only as the smoke has cleared away, but always in time to demand the spoils! She has filched from the systems of philosophy of every land and age, and after bedaubing them with her own gaudy colors, has foisted them upon unthinking mankind as divine decrees and mandates! She has foully insulted God and man!—"

"*Caramba*, Padre! You are not well! *Hombre*, we must get back to the hill! You are falling sick!"

"I am not, Rosendo! You voice the Church's stock complaint of every man who exposes her shams: 'He hath a devil!' "

Rosendo whistled softly. José went on more excitedly:

"You ask if Hernandez is in paradise or purgatory. He is in a state no better nor worse than our own, for both are wholly mental. We are now in the fires of as great a purgatory as any man can ever experience! Yes, there is a purgatory—right here on earth—and it follows us after death, and after every death that we shall die, until we learn to know God and see Him as infinite good, without taint or trace of evil! The flames of hell are eternal to us as long as we eat of 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'—as long as we believe in other powers than God—as long as we believe sin and disease and evil to be as real and as potent as good! When we know these things as awful human illusions, and when we recognize God as the infinite mind that did not create evil, and does not know or behold it, then, and then only, will the flames of purgatory and hell in this state of consciousness which we mistakenly call life, and in the states of consciousness still to come, begin to diminish in intensity, and finally die out!"

He walked along in silence for some moments. Then he turned to Rosendo and put his hand affectionately upon the old man's shoulder. "My good friend," he said more calmly, "I speak with intense feeling, for I have suffered much through the intolerance, the unspirituality, and the worldly ambition of the agents of Holy Church. I suffer, because I see what she is, and how widely she has missed the mark. But, worse, I see how blindly, how cruelly, she leads and betrays her trusting children—and it is the thought of that which at times almost drives me mad! But never mind me, Rosendo. Let me rave. My full heart must empty itself. Do you but look to Carmen for your faith. She is not of the Church. She knows God, and she will lead you straight to Him. And as you follow her, your foolish ideas of purgatory, hell, and paradise, of wafers and virgins—all the tawdry beliefs which the Church has laid upon you, will drop off, one by one, and melt away as do the mists on the lake when the sun mounts high."

Carmen and Doña Maria sat against the wall of the old church, waiting for them. The child ran through the darkness and grasped José's hand.

"I wouldn't go to sleep until you came, Padre!" she cried happily. "I wanted to be sure you wouldn't sleep anywhere else than right next to me."

"Padre," admonished Rosendo anxiously, "do you think you ought to let her come close to you now? The plague—"

José turned to him and spoke low. "There is no power or influence that we can exert upon her, Rosendo, either for good or evil. She is obeying a spiritual law of which we know but little."

"And that, Padre?"

"Just this, Rosendo: *'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.'* "

The late moon peeped timidly above the drowsing tree-tops. Its yellow beams stole silently across the still lake and up the hillside to the crumbling church. When they reached the four quiet figures, huddled close against the ghostly wall, they filtered like streams of liquid gold through the brown curls of the little head lying on the priest's shoulder. And there they dwelt as symbols of Love's protecting care over the trusting children of this world, until the full dawn of the glorious sun of Truth.

CHAPTER 21

JOSE rose from his hard bed stiff and weary. Depression sat heavily upon his soul, and he felt miserably unable to meet the day. Doña Maria was preparing the coffee over a little fire back of the church. The odor of the steaming liquid drifted to him on the warm morning air and gave him a feeling of nausea. A sharp pain shot through his body. His heart stopped. Was the plague's cold hand settling upon him? Giddiness seized him, and he sat down again upon the rocks.

In the road below a cloud of dust was rising, and across the distance a murmur of voices floated up to his ears. Men were approaching. He wondered dully what additional trouble it portended. Rosendo came to him at that moment.

"*Muy buenos dias, Padre.* I saw a boat come across the lake some minutes ago. I wonder if Don Mario has returned."

The men below were ascending the hill. José struggled to his feet and went forth to meet them. A familiar voice greeted him cheerily.

"*Hola, Señor Padre José! Dios mio,* but your hill is steep!"

José strained his eyes at the newcomer. The man quickly gained the summit, and hurried to grasp the bewildered priest's hand.

"Love of the Virgin! don't you know me, *Señor Padre?*" he cried, slapping José roundly upon the back.

The light of recognition slowly came into the priest's eyes. The man was Don Jorge, his erstwhile traveling companion on the Magdalena river.

"And now a cup of that coffee, if you will do me the favor, my good *Cura.* And then tell me what ails you here," he added, seating himself. "*Caramba,* what a town! Diego was right—the devil himself made this place! But they say you have all taken to dying! Have you nothing else to do? *Caramba,* I do not wonder! Such a God-forsaken spot! Well, what is it? Speak, man!"

José collected his scattered thoughts. "The cholera!" he said hoarsely.

"Cholera! *Caramba!* so they told me down below, and I would not believe them! But where did it come from?"

"One of our men brought it from Bodega Central."

"Bodega Central!" ejaculated Don Jorge. "Impossible! I came from there this morning myself. Have been there two days. There isn't a trace of cholera in the place, as far as I know! You have all gone crazy—but small wonder!" looking out over the decrepit town.

The priest's head was awhirl. He felt his senses leaving him. His ears were reporting things basely false. "You say—" he began in bewilderment.

"I say what I have said, *amigo!* There is no more cholera in Bodega Central than there is in heaven! I arrived there day before yesterday, and left before sunrise this morning. So I should know."

José sank weakly down at the man's side. "But—Don Jorge—Feliz Gomez returned from there three nights ago, and reported that a Turk, who had come up from the coast, had died of the plague!"

Don Jorge's brows knit in perplexity. "I recall now," he said slowly, after some moments of study. "The inn-keeper did say that a Turk had died there—some sort of intestinal trouble, I believe. When I told him I was bound for Simití, he laughed as if he would split, and then began to talk about the great fright he had given a man from here. Said he scared the fellow until his black face turned white. But I was occupied with my own affairs, and paid him little attention. But come, tell me all about it."

With the truth slowly dawning upon his clouded thought, José related the grewsome experiences of the past three days.

"*Ca-ram-ba!*" Don Jorge whistled softly. "Who would have thought it! But, was Feliz Gomez sick before he went to Bodega Central?"

"I do not know," replied José.

"Yes, señor," interposed Rosendo. "He and Amado Sanchez both had bowel trouble. Their women told my wife so, after you and I, Padre, had come up here to the hill. But it was nothing. We have it here often, as you know."

"True," assented José, "but we have never given it any serious thought."

Don Jorge leaned back and broke into a roar of laughter. "*Por el amor del cielo!* You are all crazy, *amigo*—you die like rats of fear! Did you ever put a mouse into a bottle and then scare it to death with a loud noise? *Hombre!* That is what has happened to you!" The hill reverberated with his loud shouts.

But José could not share in the merriment. The awful consequences of the inn-keeper's coarse joke upon the childish minds of these poor, impressionable people pressed heavily upon his heart. Bitter tears welled to his eyes. He sprang to his feet.

"Come, Rosendo!" he cried. "We must go down and tell these people the truth!"

Don Jorge joined them, and they all hastened down into the town. Ramona Chaves met them in the *plaza,* her eyes streaming.

"Padre," she wailed, "my man Pedro has the sickness! He is dying!"

"Nothing of the kind, Ramona!" loudly cried José; "there is no cholera here!" He hastened to the bedside of the writhing Pedro.

"Up, man!" he shouted, seizing his hand. "Up! You are not sick! There is no cholera in Simiti! There is none in Bodega Central! Feliz did not bring it! He and Amado had only a touch of the flux, and they died of fear!"

The priest's ringing words acted upon the man like magic. He roused up from his lethargy and stared at the assemblage. Don Jorge repeated the priest's words, and added his own laughing and boisterous comments. Pedro rose from his bed, and stood staring.

Together, their little band augmented at every corner by the startled people, they hurried to the homes of all who lay upon beds of sickness, spreading the glad tidings, until the little town was in a state of uproar. Like black shadows before

the light, the plague fled into the realm of imagination from which it had come. By night, all but Mateo Gil were up and about their usual affairs. But even Mateo had revived wonderfully; and José was confident that the good news would be the leaven of health that would work a complete restoration within him in time. The exiles left the hilltop and the old church, and returned again to their homes. Don Jorge took up his abode with José.

"*Bien,*" he said, as they sat at the rear door of the priest's house, looking through the late afternoon haze out over the lake, "you have had a strange experience—*Caramba!* most strange!—and yet one from which you should gather an excellent lesson. You are dealing with children here—children who have always been rocked in the cradle of the Church. But—" looking archly at José, "do I offend? For, as I told you on the boat a year ago, I do not think you are a good priest." He laughed softly. "*Bien,*" he added, "I will correct that. You are good—but not a priest, is it not so?"

"I have some views, Don Jorge, which differ radically from those of the faith," José said cautiously.

"*Caramba!* I should hope so!" his friend ejaculated.

"But," interposed José, anxious to direct the conversation into other channels, "may I ask how and where you have occupied yourself since I left the boat at Badillo?"

"Ah, *Dios!*" said Don Jorge, shaking his head, although his eyes twinkled. "I have wandered ever since—and am poorer now than when I started. I left our boat at Puerto Nacional, to go to Medellín; and from there to Remedios and Guamocó. But while in the river town I met another *guaquero*—grave hunter, you know—who was preparing to go to Honda, to investigate the 'castles' at that place. There is a strange legend —you may have heard it—hanging over those rocks. It appears that a lone hermit lived in one of the many caverns in the great limestone deposits rising abruptly from the river near the town of Honda. How he came there, no one knew. Day after day, year after year, he labored in his cave, extending it further into the hillside. People laughed at him for tunneling in that barren rock, for gold has never been found anywhere in it. But the fellow paid them no attention; and gradually he was accepted as a harmless fanatic, and was left unmolested to dig his way into the hill as far as he would. Years passed. No one knew how the fellow lived, for he held no human intercourse. Kind people often brought food and left it at the mouth of his cavern, but he would have none of it. They brought clothes, but they rotted where they were left. What he ate, no one could discover. At last some good soul

planted a fig tree near the cave, hoping that the fruit in time would prove acceptable to him. One day they found the tree cut down. *Bien*, time passed, and he was forgotten. One day some men, passing the cave, found his body, pale and thin, with long, white hair, lying at the entrance. But—*Caramba!* when they buried the body they found it was that of a woman!"

He paused to draw some leaves of tobacco from his wallet and roll a thick cigar. The sudden turn of his story drew an expression of amazement from the priest.

"*Bien*," he resumed, "where the woman came from, and who she was, never was learned. Nor how she lived. But of course some one must have supplied her with food and clothes all these years. Perhaps she was some grand dame, with a dramatic past, who had come there to escape the world and do penance for her sins. What sorrow, what black tragedy that cave concealed, no one may ever know! Nor am I at all interested in that. The point is, either she found gold there, or had a quantity of it that she brought with her—at least so I thought at the time. So, when the *guaquero* at Puerto Nacional told me the story, nothing would do but I must go with him to search the cave. *Caramba!* We wasted three full months prying around there—and had our labor for our pains!"

He tilted his chair back and puffed savagely at his cigar.

"Well, then I got on the windy side of another legend, a wild tale of buried treasure in the vicinity of Mompox. Of course I hurried after it. Spent six months pawing the hot dirt around that old town. Fell in with your estimable citizen, Don Felipe, who swindled me out of a hundred good *pesos oro* on a fraudulent location and a forged map. Then I cursed him and the place and went up to Banco."

"Banco!" José's heart began beating rapidly. Don Jorge went on:

"Your genial friend Diego is back there. Told me about his trip to Simití to see his little daughter."

"What did he say about her, *amigo?*" asked José in a controlled voice.

"Not much—only that he expected to send for her soon. You know, Rosendo's daughter is living with him. Fine looking wench, too!"

"But, Don Jorge," pursued José anxiously, "what think you, is the little Carmen Diego's child?"

"*Hombre!* How should I know? He no doubt has many."

"She does not look like him," asserted José, clinging to his note of optimism.

"No. And fortunate she is in that! *Caramba*, but he looks like an imp from sheol!"

José saw that little consolation was to be derived from Don Jorge as far as Carmen was concerned. So he allowed the subject to lapse.

"*Bien*," continued Don Jorge, whose present volubility was in striking contrast to his reticence on the boat the year before, "I had occasion to come up to Bodega Central—another legend, if I must confess it. And there Don Carlos Norosí directed me here."

"What a life!" exclaimed José.

"Yes, no doubt it appears so to you, *Señor Padre*," replied Don Jorge. "And yet my business, that of treasure hunting, has in times past proved very lucrative. The Indian graves of Colombia have yielded enormous quantities of gold. The Spaniards opened many of them; and in one, that of a famous chieftain, discovered down below us, near Zaragoza, they found a solid gold pineapple, a marvelous piece of workmanship, and of immense value. They sent it to the king of Spain. *Caramba!* it never would have reached him if I had been there!

"But," he resumed, "we have no idea of the amount of treasure that has been buried in various parts of Colombia. This country has been, and still is, enormously rich in minerals —a veritable gold mine of itself. And since the time of the Spanish conquest it has been in a state of almost constant turmoil. Nothing and nobody has been safe. And, up to very recent times, whenever the people collected a bit of gold above their daily needs, they promptly banked it with good Mother Earth. Then, like as not, they got themselves killed in the wars, and the treasure was left for some curious and greedy hunter like myself to dig up years after. The Royalists and Tories buried huge sums all over the country during the War of Independence. Why, it was only a year or so ago that two men came over from Spain and went up the Magdalena river to Bucaramanga. They were close-mouthed fellows, well-dressed, and evidently well-to-do. But they had nothing to say to anybody. The inn-keeper pried around until he discovered that they spent much time in their room poring over maps and papers. Then they set off alone, with an outfit of mules and supplies to last several weeks. *Bueno*, they came back at last with a box of good size, made of mahogany, and bound around with iron bands. *Caramba!* They did not tarry long, you may be sure. And I learned afterward that they sailed away safely from Cartagena, box and all, for sunny Spain, where, I doubt not, they are now living in idleness and gentlemanly ease on what they found in the big coffer they dug up near that old Spanish city."

José listened eagerly. To him, cooped up for a year and

more in the narrow confines of Simití, the ready flow of this man's conversation was like a fountain of sparkling water to a thirsty traveler. He urged him to go on, plying him with questions about his strange avocation.

"*Caramba,* but the old Indian chiefs were wise fellows!" Don Jorge pursued. "They seemed to know that greedy vandals like myself would some day poke around in their last resting places for the gold that was always buried with them—possibly to pay their freight across the dark river. And so they dug their graves in the form of an L, in the extreme tip of which the royal carcasses were laid. In this way they have deceived many a grave-hunter, who dug straight down without finding the body, which was safely tucked away in the toe of the L. I have gone back and reopened many a grave that I had abandoned as empty, and found His Royal Highness five or six feet to one side of the straight shaft I had previously sunk."

"I suppose," mused José, "that you now follow this work because of its fascination—for you must have found and laid aside much treasure in the years that you have pursued it."

"*Caramba!*" ejaculated the *guaquero.* "I have been rich and poor, like the rising and setting of the sun! What I find, I spend again hunting more. It is the way of the world. The man who has enough money never knows it. And his greed for more—more that he needs not, and cannot possibly spend on himself—generally results, as in my case, in the loss of what he already has. But there are reasons aside from the excitement of the chase that keep me at it."

He fell strangely silent, and José knew that there were aroused within him memories that seared the tissues of the brain as they entered.

"*Amigo,*" Don Jorge resumed. His voice was low, tense and cold. "There are some things which I am trying to forget. This exciting and dangerous business of mine keeps my thought occupied. I care nothing now for the treasure I may discover. But I crave forgetfulness. Do you understand?"

"Surely, good friend," replied José quickly; "and I ask pardon for recalling those things to you."

"*De nada, amigo!*" said Don Jorge, with a gesture of deprecation. Then: "I told you on the boat that I had lost a wife and girl. The Church got them both. I tell you this because I know you, too, have grievances against her. *Caramba!* Yet I will tell you only a part. I lived in Maganguey, where my wife's brother kept a store and did an excellent commission business. I was mining and hunting graves in the Cauca region, sometimes going up the Magdalena, too, and working on both sides of the river. Maganguey was a convenient place

for me to live, as it stands at the junction of the two great rivers. Besides, my wife wished to remain near her own people. *Bien,* we had a daughter. She grew up fair and good. And then, one day, the priest told my wife that the girl was destined to a great future, and must enter a convent and consecrate herself to the Church. *Caramba!* I am not a Catholic —was never one! My parents were patriots, and both took part in the great war that gave liberty to this country. But they were liberal in thought; and I was never confirmed to the Church. *Bien,* the priest made my life a hell—my wife became estranged from me—and one day, returning from the Cauca, I found my house deserted. Wife and girl and the child's nurse had gone down the river!"

The man's face darkened, and hard lines drew around his mouth.

"They had taken my money chest, some thousands of *pesos.* I sought the priest. He laughed at me, and—*Caramba!* I struck him such a blow between his pig eyes that he lay senseless for hours!"

José glanced at the broad shoulders and the great knots of muscle on the man's arms. He was of medium height, but with a frame of iron.

"Bien, Señor Padre, I, too, fled wild and raving from Maganguey that night, and plunged into the jungle. Months later I drifted down the river, as far as Mompox. And there one day I chanced upon old Marcelena, the child's nurse. Like a *cayman* I seized her and dragged her into an alley. She confessed that my wife and girl were living there—the wife had become housekeeper for a young priest—the girl was in the convent. *Caramba!* I hurled the woman to the ground and turned my back upon the city!"

José's interest in the all too common recital received a sudden stimulus.

"Your daughter's name, Don Jorge, was—"

"Maria, *Señor Padre."*

"And—she would now be, how old, perhaps?"

"About twenty-two, I think."

"Her appearance?"

"Fair—complexion light, like her mother's. Maria was a beautiful child—and good as she was beautiful."

"But—the child's nurse remained with her?"

"Marcelena? Yes. She was devoted to the little Maria. The woman was old and ugly—but she loved the child."

"Did you not inquire for them when you were in Mompox a few months ago?" pursued José eagerly.

"I made slight inquiry through the clerk in the office of

the Alcalde. I did not intend to—but I could not help it. *Caramba!* He made further inquiry, but said only that he was told they had long since gone down to Cartagena, and nothing had been heard from them."

The gates of memory's great reservoir opened at the touch of this man's story, and José again lived through that moonlit night in Cartagena, when the little victim of Wenceslas breathed out her life of sorrow and shame in his arms. He heard again the sobs of Marcelena and the simple-minded Catalina. He saw again the figure of the compassionate Christ in the smoke that drifted past the window. And now the father of that wronged girl sat before him, wrapped in the tatters of a shredded happiness! Should he tell him? Should he say that he had cared for this man's little grandson since his advent into this sense of existence that mortals call life? For there could be no doubt now that the little Maria was his daughter.

"Don Jorge," he said, "you have suffered much. My heart bleeds for you. And yet—"

"*Na,* Padre, there is nothing to do. Were I to find my family I could only slay them and the priests who came between us!"

"But, Don Jorge," cried José in horror, "you surely meditate no such vengeance as that!"

The man smiled grimly. *"Señor Padre,"* he returned coldly, "I am Spanish. The blood of the old cavaliers flows in my veins. I have been betrayed, trapped, fooled, and my honored name has been foully soiled. What will remove the stain, think you? Blood—nothing else! *Caramba!* The priest of Maganguey who poured the first drop of poison into my wife's too willing ears—*Bien,* I have said enough!"

"Hombre! You don't mean—"

"I mean, *Señor Padre,* that I drifted down the river, unseen, to Maganguey one night. I entered that priest's house. He did not awake the next morning."

"God!" exclaimed José, starting up.

"*Na,* Padre, not God, but Satan! He rules this world."

José sank back in his chair. Don Jorge leaned forward and laid a hand upon his knee. "My friend," he said evenly, "you are young—how old, may I ask?"

"Twenty-seven," murmured José.

"*Caramba!* A child! *Bien,* you have much to learn. I took to you on the boat because I knew you had made a mess of things, and it was not entirely your fault. I have seen others like you. You are no more in the Church than I am. Now why do you stay here? Do I offend in asking?"

José hesitated. "I—I have—work here, señor," he replied.

"True," said Don Jorge, "a chance to do much for these poor people—if the odds are not too strong against you. But —are you working for them alone? Or—does Diego's child figure in the case? No offense, I assure you—I have reason to ask."

José sought to read his eyes. The man looked squarely into his own, and the priest found no deception in their black depths.

"I—señor, she cannot be Diego's child—and I—I would save her!"

Don Jorge nodded his head. *"Bien,"* he said, "to-morrow I leave for San Lucas. I will return this way."

After the evening meal the *guaquero* spread his *petate* upon the floor and disposed himself for the night. He stubbornly refused to accept the priest's bed. *"Caramba!"* he muttered, after he had lain quiet for some time, "why does not the Church permit its clergy to marry, like civilized beings! Do you know, *Señor Padre,* I once met a woman in Bogotá and held some discussion with her on this topic. She said, as between a priest who had children, and a married minister, she would infinitely prefer the priest, because, as she put it, no matter how dissolute the priest, the sacraments from his hands would still retain their validity—but never from those of a married minister! *Caramba!* what can you do against such bigotry and awful narrowness, such dense ignorance! *Cielo!"*

The following morning, before sunrise, Don Jorge and his boatmen were on the lake, leaving José to meditate on the vivid experiences of the past few days, their strange mental origin, and the lesson which they brought.

CHAPTER 22

"PADRE dear," said Carmen, "you know the question that we put under the altar of the old church? Well, God answered it, didn't He?"

"I—why, I had forgotten it, child. What was it? You asked Him to tell us why the people thought they had to die, did you not? Well—and what was His answer?"

"Why, He told us that they were frightened to death, you know."

"True, *chiquita.* Fear killed them—nothing else! They paid the penalty of death for believing that Feliz Gomez had slept on a bed where a man had died of the plague. They died because they—"

"Because they didn't know that God was everywhere, Padre dear," interrupted Carmen.

"Just so, *chiquita.* And that is why all people die. And yet," he added sadly, "how are we going to make them know that He is everywhere?"

"Why, Padre dear, by showing them in our talk and our actions that we know it—by proving it, you know, just as we prove our problems in algebra."

"Yes, poor Feliz, and Amado, and Guillermo died because they sinned," he mused. "They broke the first Commandment by believing that there was another power than God. And that sin brought its inevitable wage, death. They 'missed the mark,' and sank into the oblivion of their false beliefs. God above! that I could keep my own mentality free from these same carnal beliefs, and so be a true missionary to suffering humanity! But you, Carmen, you are going to be such a missionary. And I believe," he muttered through his set teeth, "that I am appointed to shield the girl until God is ready to send her forth! But what, oh, what will she do when she meets that world which lies beyond her little Simití?"

Rosendo had returned to Guamocó. "The deposit will not last much longer," he said to José, shaking his head dubiously. "And then—"

"Why, then we will find another, Rosendo," replied the priest optimistically.

"Ojalá!" exclaimed the old man, starting for the trail.

The day after Don Jorge's departure the Alcalde returned. He stole shamefacedly through the streets and barricaded himself in his house. There he gave vent to his monumental wrath. He cruelly abused his long-suffering spouse, and ended by striking her across the face. After which he sat down and laboriously penned a long letter to Padre Diego, in which the names of José and Carmen figured plentifully.

For Don Jorge had met the Alcalde in Juncal, and had roundly jeered him for his cowardly flight. He cited José and Rosendo as examples of valor, and pointed out that the Alcalde greatly resembled a captain who fled at the smell of gunpowder. Don Mario swelled with indignation and shame. His spleen worked particularly against Rosendo and the priest. Come what might, it was time Diego and his superiors in Cartagena knew what was going on in the parish of Simití!

A few days later an unctuous letter came to José from Diego, requesting that Carmen be sent to him at once, as he now desired to place her in a convent and thus supplement the religious education which he was sure José had so well begun in her. The priest had scarcely read the letter when Don Mario appeared at the parish house.

"Bien, Padre," he began smoothly, but without concealing the malice which lurked beneath his oily words, "Padre Diego sends for the little Carmen, and bids me arrange to have her conveyed at once to Banco. I think Juan will take her down, is it not so?"

José looked him squarely in the eyes. "No, señor," he said in a voice that trembled with agitation, "it is *not* so!"

"Hombre!" exclaimed Don Mario, swelling with suppressed rage. "You refuse to give Diego his own child?"

"No, señor, but I refuse to give him a child that is not his."

"Caramba! but she is—he has the proofs! And I shall send her to him this day!"

The Alcalde shrilled forth his rage like a ruffled parrot. José seized him by the shoulders and, turning him swiftly about, pushed him out into the road. He then entered the rear door of Rosendo's house and bade Doña Maria keep the child close to her.

A few minutes later Fernando Perez appeared at José's door. He was municipal clerk, secretary, and constable of Simití, all in one. He saluted the priest gravely, and demanded the body of the child Carmen, to be returned to her proper father.

José groaned inwardly. What could he do against the established authority?

"Bien, Padre," said Fernando, after delivering his message, "the hour is too late to send her down the river to-day. But deliver her to me, and she shall go down at daybreak."

"Listen," José pleaded desperately, "Fernando, leave her here to-night—this is sudden, you must acknowledge—she must have time to take leave of Doña Maria—and—"

"Señor Padre, the Alcalde's order is that she go with me now. I must obey."

José felt his control oozing fast. Scarce knowing what he did, he quickly stepped back through the rear door, and going to Rosendo's house, seized a large *machete,* with which he returned to face the constable.

"Look you, Fernando," he cried, holding the weapon menacingly aloft, "if you lay a hand on that girl, I will scatter your brains through yonder *plaza!"*

"Caramba!" muttered the constable, falling back. *"Bien,"* he hastily added, "I will make this report to the Alcalde!" With which he beat an abrupt retreat.

José sank into a chair. But he hastily arose and went into Rosendo's house. "Doña Maria!" he cried excitedly, "leave Carmen with me, and do you hurry through the town and see if Juan is here, and if Lázaro Ortiz has returned from the

hacienda. Bid them come to me at once, and bring their *machetes!*"

The woman set out on her errand. José seized his *machete* firmly in one hand, and with the other drew Carmen to him.

"What is it, Padre dear?" the child asked, her eyes big with wonder. "Why do you tremble? I wish you wouldn't always go around thinking that two and two are seven!"

"Carmen, child—you do not understand—you are too young, and as yet you have had no experience with—with the world! You must trust me now!"

"I do *not* trust you, Padre," she said sadly. "I can't trust anybody who always sees things that are not so."

"Carmen—you are in danger—and you do not comprehend—" cried the desperate man.

"I am *not* in danger—and I *do* understand—a great deal better than you do, Padre. Now let me go—you are afraid! People who are afraid die of the plague!" The irony of her words sank into his soul.

Juan looked in at the door. José rose hastily. "Did you meet Doña Maria?" he asked.

"No, señor," the lad replied.

"She is searching for you—have you your *machete?*"

"Yes, Padre, I have just come back from the island, where I was cutting wood."

"Good, then! Remain here with me. I need you—or may."

He went to the door and looked eagerly down the street. "Ah!" he exclaimed with relief, "here come Doña Maria and Lázaro! Now, friends," he began, when they were assembled before him, "grave danger threatens—"

"Padre!" It was Doña Maria's voice. "Where is Carmen?"

José turned. The child had disappeared.

"Lázaro!" he cried, "go at once to the Boque trail! Let no one pass that way with Carmen, if your life be the penalty! Juan, hurry to the lake! If either of you see her, call loudly, and I will come! Doña Maria, start through the town! We must find her! God above, help us!"

* * * * * *

The afternoon dragged its interminable length across the valley. José wearily entered his house and threw himself upon a chair. He had not dared call at the Alcalde's house, for fear he might do that official violence. But he had seen Fernando in the street, and had avoided him. Then, of a sudden, a thought came to him from out the darkness. He sprang to his feet and hurried off toward the shales. There, beneath the stunted *algarroba* tree, sat the child.

"Carmen!" He rushed to her and clasped her in his arms. "Why did you do this—?"

"Padre," she replied, when she could get her breath, "I had to come out here and try to know for you the things you ought to know for yourself."

He said nothing; but, holding her hand tightly, he led her back to the house.

That evening José sent for Don Mario, the constable, and Juan and Lázaro. Assembling them before him in his living room, he talked with them long and earnestly.

"Compadres," he said, "this week we have passed through a sad experience, and the dark angel has robbed us of three of our beloved friends. Is it your wish that death again visit us?"

They looked at one another in wonder. The Alcalde scowled darkly at the priest beneath his heavy brows. José continued:

"Bien, it is planned to seize the little Carmen by force, and send her down the river to Padre Diego—"

"Dios y diablo!" Juan had sprung to his feet. "Who says that, Padre?" he demanded savagely. The Alcalde shrank back in his chair.

"Be calm, Juan!" José replied. "Padre Diego sends for her by letter—is it not so, Don Mario?"

The latter grunted. Juan wheeled about and stared menacingly at the bulky official.

"Now, friends," José pursued, "it has not been shown that Carmen belongs to Diego—in fact, all things point to the conclusion that she is not his child. My wish is to be just to all concerned. But shall we let the child go to him, knowing what manner of man he is, until it is proven beyond all doubt that he is her father?"

"Caramba! No!" exclaimed Juan and Lázaro in unison.

"And I am of the opinion that the majority of our citizens would support us in the contention. What think you, friends?"

"Every man in Simití, Padre," replied Lázaro earnestly.

"Don Mario," said José, turning to the Alcalde, "until it is established that Diego has a parent's claim to the girl, Juan and Lázaro and I will protect her with our lives. Is it not so, *amigos?"* addressing the two men.

"Hombre! Let me see a hand laid upon her!" cried Juan rising.

Lázaro spoke more deliberately. "Padre," he said. "I owe you much. I know you to be a good man—not like Padre Diego. I know not what claim he may have on the girl, but this I say: I will follow and support you until it is shown me that you are in the wrong."

José went over and clasped his hand. Then, to the town officials:

"Bien, amigos, we will let the matter rest thus, shall we not? We now understand one another. If harm comes to the child, the death angel will again stalk through this town, and—" he looked hard at Don Mario, whilst that official visibly shrank in size—*"Bien,"* he concluded, "a sharp watch will be kept over the child. We will submit to proofs—but to nothing less. And violence will bring bloodshed and death."

"But—*Caramba!"* cried Don Mario, at last finding his voice. "If Diego has the Bishop back of him, he will force us to deliver the girl—or the Bishop will have the government soldiers sent here! I can ask for them—and if necessary I will!"

José paled slightly. He knew the Alcalde spoke truth. Don Mario, seeing that his words had taken effect, quickly followed up the advantage. "Now you, Juan and Lázaro, do you think the little whelp worth that?"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when Juan leaped across the floor and fell upon him. José seized the lad and, with Fernando's help, tore him loose. Lázaro held his *machete* aloft, ready to strike. José's voice rang out sharply:

"Hold, men! Stop! Go you to your homes now! Juan, do you stay here with me!"

The lad faced the Alcalde and shook his fist. *"Bien,"* he sputtered, "send for the soldiers, fat dog that you are! But when I see them crossing the lake, I will come first to your house and cut open that big belly!"

"Arrest him, Fernando!" shrilled the Alcalde, shaking with rage.

"I will cut off the hand that is laid on Juan!" cried Lázaro, advancing.

"Men! Men! Don Mario and Fernando, go now! Enough of this! And for God's sake think twice before you make any further move!"

Don Mario and his constable departed in sullen silence. José let Lázaro out through the rear door, while he bade Juan pass the night in the parish house. A consultation was held with Doña Maria, and it was arranged that Carmen should sleep in the room with José, with Juan lying before the door, until Rosendo should return from the mountains. Then José sat down and wrote to the Bishop.

* * * * * *

No reply came from Cartagena until Rosendo returned at the end of the month. Meanwhile, José had never for a moment permitted Carmen to leave his side. The child chafed under the limitation; but José and Doña Maria were firm. Juan lived with the priest; and Lázaro lurked about the parish house like a shadow. The Alcalde and his constable remained discreetly aloof.

But with Rosendo's return came letters from both Wenceslas and Diego. The latter had laid aside his unction, and now made a curt and peremptory demand upon José for the child. The letter from Wenceslas was noncommittal, stating only that he was quite uninformed of Diego's claim, but that an investigation should be made. José wondered if he had blundered in laying the case before him.

"Hombre!" ejaculated Rosendo, when he heard José's story. "It is as I feared! And now the Bishop has the matter in hand! *Caramba!* We shall lose her yet!

"And, Padre," he added, "the deposit is played out. There is no more gold there. And, now that we shall have none to send to the Bishop each month, Carmen's fate is settled—unless we go away. And where shall we go? We could not get out of the country." He hung his head and sat in gloomy dejection.

For more than a year Rosendo had panned the isolated alluvial deposit, and on his regular monthly returns to Simití he and the priest had sent from thirty to ninety *pesos* gold to Wenceslas. To this José sometimes added small amounts collected from the people of Simití, which they had gratuitously given him for Masses and for the support of the parish. Wenceslas, knowing the feeble strength of the parish, was surprised, but discreet; and though he continually urged José to greater efforts, and held out the allurements of "indulgences and special dispensations," he made no inquiries regarding the source of the monthly contributions.

For many days following, Rosendo and the priest went about as in a thick, black cloud. "Rosendo," said José at length, "go back to the mountains and search again. God was with us before. Have we any reason to doubt Him now?"

"And leave Carmen here, exposed to the danger that always hangs over her? *Caramba,* no! I would not go back now even if the deposit were not worked out! No!" José knew it would be futile to urge him.

Carmen came to the priest that same day. "Padre, I heard you and padre Rosendo talking this morning. Have you no money, no gold?"

"Why, child—there seems to be a need just at present," he replied lightly. "But we might—well, we might send another of your questions to God. What say you?"

"Of course!" she cried delightedly, turning at once and hurrying away for pencil and paper.

"Now," she panted, seating herself at the table. "Let us see; we want Him to give us *pesos,* don't we?"

"Yes—many—a large sum. Make it big," he said facetiously.

"Well, you know, Padre dear," she replied seriously, "we can't ask for too much—for we already have everything, haven't we? After all, we can only ask to see what we really already have.

"Say 'yes,' Padre dear," she pleaded, looking up appealingly at him staring silently at her. Oh, if she could only impart to him even a little of her abundant faith! She had enough, and to spare!

"Well, here it is," she said, holding out the paper.

He took it and read—"Dear, dear God: Padre José needs *pesos*—lots of them. What shall he do?"

"And now," she continued, "shall we put it under the altar of the old church?"

He smiled; but immediately assumed an expression of great seriousness. "Why not in the church here, the one we are using? The other is so far away?" he suggested. "And it is getting dark now."

"But—no, we will go where we went before," she concluded firmly.

Again he yielded. Taking matches and a piece of candle, he set off with the girl in a circuitous route for the hill, which they gained unobserved. Within the musty old church he struck a light, and they climbed over the *débris* and to the rear of the crumbling altar.

"See!" she cried joyously. "Here is my other question that He answered! Doesn't He answer them quick though! Why, it took only a day!"

She drew the old paper from beneath the adobe brick. Then she hesitated. "Let us put this question in a new place," she said. "Look, up there, where the bricks have fallen out," pointing to the part of the altar that had crumbled away.

José rose obediently to execute the commission. His thought was far off, even in Cartagena, where sat the powers that must be held quiet if his cherished plans were not to fail. He reached out and grasped one of the projecting bricks to steady himself. As he did so, the brick, which was loose, gave way with him, and he fell, almost across Carmen, followed by a shower of rubbish, as another portion of the old altar fell out.

"Hombre!" he ejaculated, picking himself up. "What good luck that the candle was not extinguished! And now, señorita, are you willing that we should bury this important question here on the floor; or must I again try to put it in the altar itself?"

"Up there," insisted the child, laughing and still pointing above.

He rose and looked about, searching for a convenient place

to deposit the paper. Then something attracted his attention, something buried in the altar, but now exposed by the falling out of the fresh portion. It was metal, and it glittered in the feeble candle light. He reached in and hastily scraped away more of the hard mud. Then, trembling with suppressed excitement, he pulled out another brick. Clearly, it was a box that had been buried in there—who knows when? He gave the candle to Carmen and bade her stand up close. Then with both hands he carefully removed the adjacent bricks until the entire box was in view.

"*Hombre!*" he muttered. "What do you suppose this is? A box—"

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl in delight. "A box to put our question in, Padre!"

"More likely the answer itself, child!" muttered the excited priest, straining and tugging away at it. "Carmen! Stand aside!" he suddenly commanded. "Now—" He gave a final pull. A crash of falling bricks followed; the candle was extinguished; and both he and the child were precipitated to the floor.

"Carmen!" called the priest, choking with dust, "are you hurt?"

"No, Padre dear," came the laughing answer through the darkness. "But I'm pretty full of dust. And the candle is buried."

José groped about for the box. It lay near, a small, wooden coffer, bound about with two narrow bands of steel. He dragged it out and bore it down the aisle to the door, followed by Carmen.

"Padre!" she exclaimed eagerly. "What is it?"

He dusted it off and examined it carefully in the fast fading light. It was some twelve inches square by three deep, well made of mahogany, and secured by a small, iron padlock. On the top there was a crest of arms and the letters, "I de R," burned into the wood.

Night had closed in, and the priest and girl made their way hurriedly back home by way of the lake, to avoid being seen. Under his cassock José carried the box, so heavy that it chafed the skin from his hip as they stumbled along.

"Carmen, say nothing—but tell your padre Rosendo to come to me at once!"

With the doors secured, and Carmen and Doña Maria standing guard outside to apprise them of danger, José and Rosendo covertly examined the discovery.

"I de R!" pondered Rosendo, studying the box. Then—"*Caramba!* Padre—*Caramba!* It is *Ignacio de Rincón! Hombre!*

And the crest—it is his! I have seen it before—years and years ago! *Caramba! Caramba!"* The old man danced about like a child.

"Ignacio de Rincón! Your grandfather!" he kept exclaiming, his eyes big as saucers. Then, hastening out to get his iron bar, he returned and with a blow broke the rusty padlock. Tearing open the hinged cover, he fell back with a loud cry.

Before their strained gaze, packed carefully in sawdust, lay several bars of yellow metal. Rosendo took them out with trembling hands and laid them upon the floor. "Gold, Padre, gold!" he muttered hoarsely. "Gold, buried by your grandfather! *Caramba!*—

"Hold these, Padre!" hurrying out and returning with a pair of homemade wooden balances. Again and again he carefully weighed the bars. Then he began to calculate. It seemed to José that the old man wasted hours arriving at a satisfactory result.

"Padre," he finally announced in tones which he strove vainly to control, "there cannot be less than six thousand *pesos oro* here!"

José drew a long breath. "Six thousand *pesos*—twenty-four thousand francs! It is a fortune! Rosendo, we are rich!"

The trembling old man replaced the bars and carried them to José's bed. The priest opened the door and called to Carmen.

"What was in the old box, Padre?" she asked happily, bounding into the room.

He stooped and picked her up, almost crushing her in his arms. "The answer to your question, *chiquita.* 'Before they call I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

CHAPTER 23

WHEN José awoke the next morning he quickly put his hand under his pillow. Yes, the little coffer was there! It had not been a dream. He drew it forth and raised the cover. The yellow bars glittered in the morning rays sifting through the overhanging thatch at the window. He passed his hand gently across them. What a fortunate discovery! And how strangely brought about! They were rich! Now he could take Carmen and flee! His heart leaped within him as he hastily threw on his scant attire and went out into the balsamic air of the tropical morning. Rosendo had gone to the village of Boque, starting before sun-up, so Doña Maria an-

nounced. Some sudden impulse had seized him, and he had set out forthwith, not stopping to discuss the motive with his faithful consort. José concluded his *desayuno,* and then summoned Carmen to the parish house for the day's lessons. She came with a song on her lips.

"Don't stop, *chiquita!* Sing it again—it is beautiful; and my soul drinks it in like heavenly dew!" he cried, as the child danced up to him and threw her plump arms about his neck.

She turned about and sat down on the dusty threshold and repeated the little song. The glittering sunlight streamed through her rich curls like stringers of wire gold. Cucumbra came fawning to her and nestled at her little bare feet, caressing them at frequent intervals with his rough tongue. Cantarlas-horas approached with dignified tread, and, stopping before his adored little mistress, cocked his head to one side and listened attentively, his beady eyes blinking in the dazzling light.

José marveled anew as he listened. Where had that voice come from? Had either of her parents been so gifted? he wondered. And yet, it was only the voicing of a soul of stainless purity—a conscience clear as the light that gilded her curls —a trust, a faith, a knowledge of immanent good, that manifested daily, hourly, in a tide of happiness whose far verge melted into the shore of eternity. As he sat with closed eyes the adobe hut, with its dirt floor and shabby furnishings, expanded into a castle, hung with richest tapestries, rarest pictures, and glittering with plate of gold. The familiar odors of garlic and saffron, which penetrated from the primitive kitchen of Doña Maria, were transmuted into delicate perfumes. The sun drew nearer, and suffused him with its glittering flood. The girl became a white-robed vision, and her song a benediction, voicing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."

The song ended, and left the thought with him: "To men of good will?" Yes, to men of God's will—the will that is good —to men of sound mind—that mind which was in Christ Jesus —the mind that knows no evil! To such is eternal peace.

"Chiquita," the priest said gently, when the girl returned to him. "Your question was quickly answered yesterday, was it not?"

She laughed up into his face. "It was answered, Padre, before we asked it. God has the answers to all questions that could ever be asked. We would always know the answers if we thought the way He does."

"But—tell me, *chiquita,* do you think He put that little box up there in the altar purposely for us?"

"No, Padre—I guess it was hidden there by some man, long ago, who was afraid he would lose it. And since he was afraid he would lose it, why—he did, for now we have it."

"Yes, the thing that he greatly feared came upon him. But what is your idea regarding the way we happened to find it? Did God lead us to it?"

"God leads to everything good, Padre dear," was the simple response.

"Of course. But, in this particular case—would we have been led to the little box if you had not asked your question of God?"

"Why not, Padre? People are always led right when they think right."

"And so thinking right was the cause of this discovery, was it?" he pursued, relentlessly probing her thought to its depths.

"Why—yes, Padre—of course. We had to have money—you said so, you know. And you told me to ask for lots of *pesos*. Well, we both knew that God had already given us more *pesos* than we could ever know what to do with—He always does. He just can't help giving Himself to everybody. And He gave Himself to us—why, we have *always* had Him! We are *in* Him, you know. And when anybody just knows that—why, he sees nothing but good everywhere, and he always has all that he needs."

"All that he wants, you mean, *chiquita?*"

"No, Padre, not all that he wants. Just all that he needs. You might want all the gold in the world—but you wouldn't need it."

"No, that would be only a selfish, human want. It would be covetousness. But—you still think we were led right to the little box, do you?"

"I know it, Padre dear," she replied emphatically. "When we think good, we see good. It always comes out that way. It is just as sure as getting the right answers to my problems in algebra when I think right about them."

"And thinking right about them means using the right rule, does it not?"

"Yes—of course. If I didn't use the right rule—why, what sort of answers would I get? All jumbled up!"

"Surely—perfect chaos. But still," vigorously pursuing the subject, "you don't think we happened upon the little box just by good luck?"

"Padre," she shook her curls insistently, "things never happen, *never!* We see only what we think—always!"

"Yes, there surely does seem to be a definite law of cause and effect. But you did not think gold yesterday, *chiquita.*"

"Oh, Padre dear, what a bother you are! No, I didn't think gold yesterday. I never think gold. But I always think *good*. And that is gold and everything else that we need. Can't you see? And it wasn't just because I thought good yesterday, but because I think good every day, that I saw the gold. It was because we needed it, and God had already given us all that we needed. And I knew that it just *had* to come. And so did you. Then, because we really needed it, and knew that it was right and that it must come—well, it did. Can't you see?" Her little face was very serious as she looked up appealingly into his.

"Yes, *chiquita*, yes, I see. I just wanted to know how you would explain it. It becomes clearer to me every day that there are no such things as miracles—never were! Christ-Jesus *never* performed miracles, if by that we mean that he set aside God's laws for the benefit of mankind. But he acted in perfect accord with those laws—and no wonder the results seemed miraculous to dull-witted human minds, who had always seen only their coarse, material thought externalized in material laws and objects, in chance, mixed good and evil, and a God of human characteristics!"

"Yes—I—guess so, Padre dear—only, I don't understand your big words."

"Ah, *chiquita*, you understand far, far better than I do! Why, I am learning it all from you! But come, now for the lessons."

And José had learned by this time, too, that between merely recognizing righteousness as right-thinking, and actually practicing it—putting it to the test so as to "prove" God—there is a vast difference. Things cannot be "thought" into existence, nor evils "thought" away—the stumbling block of the mere tyro in the study of mental cause and effect. A vast development in spirituality must precede those "signs following" before mankind shall again do the works of the Master. José knew this; and he bowed in humble submission, praying for daily light.

* * * * * *

At dusk Rosendo returned. "*Bien*, Padre, I have it now, I think!" he cried excitedly, pacing back and forth in the little room.

"What, Rosendo?" asked the wondering priest.

"The secret of the little box! Come, while we eat I will tell you!"

The little group gathered about the table, while Rosendo unfolded his theory.

"I went to Boque this morning to talk with Doña Lucia. She is very aged, the oldest inhabitant in these parts. *Bien*, I

knew that she had known Don Ignacio, although she was not his slave. Her story brought back to me also the things my father had often told me about Don Ignacio's last trip to Simití. Putting all these things together, I think I now know how the little box came to be hidden in the altar of the old church."

The old man's eyes sparkled with happiness, while his auditors drew closer about him to drink in his dramatic recital. For Rosendo, like a true Latin, reveled in a wonder-tale. And his recitals were always accompanied by profuse gesticulation and wonderful facial expressions and much rolling of the eyes.

"Bien," he continued, "it was this way. Don Ignacio's possessions in Guamocó were enormous, and in the then prosperous city of Simití he had stores and warehouses and much property. When the War of Independence neared its end, and he saw that the Royalist cause was lost, he made a last and flying trip to Simití, going up the Magdalena river from Cartagena in his own *champan*, propelled by some of his still faithful slaves.

"Bien, he found that one of his foremen had just returned from the mountains with the final clean-up from La Libertad *arrastras.* These had been abandoned, for most of the slaves had deserted, or gone to fight the Spaniards. But the foreman, who was not a slave, but a faithful employe, had cleaned up the *arrastras* and hidden the amalgam until he could find a favorable opportunity to come down to Simití with it.

"Now, when Don Ignacio arrived here, he found the town practically deserted. So he and the foreman retorted the amalgam and melted the gold into bars. But, just as they had completed their task, a messenger came flying to town and reported that a body of Royalist soldiers were at Badillo, and that they had learned that Simití was the *bodega* of the rich Guamocó district, and were preparing to come over and sack the town. They were fleeing down the river to the coast, to get away to Spain as soon as possible, but had put off at Badillo to come over here. Fortunately, they had become very intoxicated, and their expedition was for that reason delayed.

"Bueno, at the news the foreman dropped everything and fled for his life. A few people gathered with the priest in the Rincón church, the one you are using now, Padre. The priest of the other old church on the hill fled. *Caramba,* but he was a coward—and he got well paid for it, too! But of that later.

"Don Ignacio's *champan* was at Badillo, and he had come across to Simití by canoe. *Bien,* he dared not take this gold back with him; and so he thought of hiding it in one of the churches, for that is always a sacred place. There were people in his own church, and so he hurried to the one on the hill. Evidently, as he looked about in the deserted building for a

place to hide the bars, he saw that some of the bricks could easily be removed from the rear of the altar. A couple of hours sufficed to do the work of secreting the box. Then he fled across the shales to the town of Boque, where he got a canoe to take him down to the Magdalena; and there he waited until he saw the soldiers come across and enter the *caño*. Then he fled to Badillo. Don Nicolás, son of Doña Lucia, was his boatman, and he says that he remained with your grandfather at that place over night, and that there they received the report that the Royalists had been terribly whipped in the battle—the battle of—*Caramba!* I forget—"

"Of Ayacucho," suggested José.

"Just so," resumed Rosendo. *"Bien,* there was nothing for the poor man to do but hasten down the river to Cartagena as fast as possible, for he knew not what might have befallen his family. He did not dare go back to Simití then for the box. And so the gold was left in the altar."

"Hombre!" exclaimed José. "Now I understand what he meant by that note in his old diary, which we had in my father's house, in Spain! Of course! Arriving in Cartagena he went at once to the Department of Mines and tore out all the pages of the register that contained descriptions of his mineral properties. He intended some day to return to Guamocó and again locate them. And meantime, he protected himself by destroying all the registered locations. It was easy for him to do this, influential as he was in Cartagena. And doubtless at that stormy time the office of the Department of Mines was deserted. This note, Rosendo, I have read in his old diary, many times, but never knew to what it referred."

"Hombre!" ejaculated Rosendo. *"Bueno,* the soldiers sacked Simití and slaughtered all the people they could find. Then they set fire to the town, and left. My parents had fled to Guamocó.

"But now for the old church and the picture of the Virgin that was lost during the terrible storm when the priest fell dead. We will have to guess that later, when peace had been restored, the priest of the old church in prying around the altar discovered the loose bricks and the box behind them. *Bueno,* the night of the awful storm he had gone secretly to the church to remove the box. I remember that my father said the priest had arranged for my father to take him down to Bodega Central the very next day. You see, he was going to flee with the gold, the rogue! *Bien,* while he was in the church taking out the loose bricks, that storm broke—and, from what I remember, it was terrible! The heavens were ablaze with lightning; the thunder roared like cannon; and the lake rose right out of its

bed! *Caramba!* The door of the church crashed open, and the wind whistled in and blew out the candles on the altar. The wind also tore loose a beautiful picture of the Virgin that was hanging near the altar. The picture was blown out of its frame and swept off to the hills, or into the lake. It was never seen again, although the frame was found just outside the door. Perhaps it was the extinguishing of the candles and the falling of the picture that frightened the old priest so terribly. At any rate he ran from the church to his house, and when he reached his door he fell dead of apoplexy.

"*Bueno,* after that you could never get any of the Simití people to enter the church again. They closed the doors and left it, just as it was, for they thought the curse of God had fallen upon it because it had been erected by the enemies of the Rincón family, whose patron saint was the blessed Virgin herself. Well, the old altar began to crumble, and parts of it fell away from time to time. And when the people heard the bricks falling they said it was the bad angel that the Virgin had locked in there—the angel of Satan that had extinguished the candles on the altar that night of the storm. *Caramba!* And I believed it, too! I am a fool, Padre, a fool!"

"We are all fools, Rosendo, when we yield ourselves to superstition and false belief," said José solemnly. "But you have worked out a very ingenious story, and I doubt not you have come very near to accounting in the right way for the presence of the little box in the altar. But now, *amigo,* come with me to my house. I would discuss a plan with you.

"It is this, Rosendo," he said, when they were alone. "We now have gold, and the way has been providentially opened. Carmen is in great danger here. What say you, shall we take her and leave Simití?"

Rosendo's face became grave. He did not reply for some moments.

"Padre," he said at length, "you are right. It would be best for her if we could get her away. But—you would have to leave the country. I see now that neither she nor you would be safe anywhere in Colombia if you left Simití."

"True, Rosendo," replied José. "And I am sure that no country offers the asylum that America does—the America of the north. I have never been there, *amigo;* but of all countries I learn that it is the most tolerant in matters religious. And it offers the greatest opportunities to one, like Carmen, just entering upon life. We will go there. And, Rosendo, prepare yourself and Doña Maria at once, for we had best start without delay."

But Rosendo shook his head. "No, Padre," he said slowly.

"No. I could not go to the North with you; nor could Maria."

"But, Rosendo!" exclaimed the priest impatiently, "why?"

"*Bien*, Padre, we are old. And we know not the language of those up there. Nor the customs. We could not adapt ourselves to their ways of life—no, not at our age. Nor could we endure the change of climate. You tell me they have cold, ice, snow, up there. What could we do? We would die. No, we must remain here. But—" his voice choked.

"*Bien*, Padre, do you go, and take the girl. Bring her up to be a power for good in that great land. We—Maria and I—will remain in Simití. It is not permitted that we should ever leave. This has always been our home, and here we will die."

José exclaimed again in impatience. But the old man was immovable.

"No, Padre, we could not make so great a change. Anywhere in Colombia would be but little different from Simití. But up north—in that great country where they do those wonderful things you have told me about—no, Padre, Maria and I could not make so great a change.

"But, Padre," he continued, "what will you do—leave the Church? Or will you still be a priest up there?"

The question startled José rudely. In the great joy which the discovery of the gold had stimulated, and in the thought of the possibilities opened by it, he had given no heed to his status respecting the Church. Yet, if he remained in the Church, he could not make this transfer without the approval of the Vatican. And that, he well knew, could not be obtained. No, if he went, he must leave behind all ecclesiastical ties. And with them, doubtless, the ties which still bound him to his distant mother and the family whose honored name he bore. It was not so easy a matter to take the girl and leave Simití, now that he gave the project further consideration.

And yet he could not abandon the idea, however great his present sense of disappointment. He would cling to it as an ideal, some day to be realized, and to be worked up to as rapidly as might be, without exciting suspicion, and without abruptly severing the ties which, on serious reflection, he found he was not morally strong enough as yet to break.

"*Bien*, Rosendo," he concluded in chastened tones. "We will think it over, and try to devise ways to accomplish the greatest good for the child. I shall remain here for the present."

Rosendo's face beamed with joy. "The way will be shown us some time, Padre!" he exclaimed. "And while we wait, we will keep our eyes open, no?"

Yes, José would keep his eyes open and his heart receptive.

After all, as he meditated the situation in the quiet of his little cottage that evening, he was not sorry that circumstances kept him longer in Simití. For he had long been meditating a plan, and the distraction incident upon a complete change of environment certainly would delay, if not entirely defeat, its consummation. He had planned to translate his Testament anew, in the light of various works on Bible criticism which the explorer had mentioned, and which the possession of the newly discovered gold now made attainable. He had with him his Greek lexicon. He would now, in the freedom from interruption which Simití could and probably would afford for the ensuing few months, give himself up to his consecrated desire to extract from the sacred writings the spiritual meaning crystallized within them. The vivid experiences which had fallen to him in Simití had resulted in the evolution of ideas—radically at variance with the world's materialistic thought, it is true—which he was learning to look upon as demonstrable truths. The Bible had slowly taken on a new meaning to him, a meaning far different from that set forth in the clumsy, awkward phrases and expressions into which the translators so frequently poured the wine of the spirit, and which, literally interpreted, have resulted in such violent controversies, such puerile ideas of God and His thought toward man, and such religious hatred and bigotry, bloodshed, suffering, and material stagnation throughout the so-called Christian era. He would approach the Gospels, not as books of almost undecipherable mystery, not as the biography of the blessed Virgin, but as containing the highest human interpretation of truth and its relation to mankind.

"I seek knowledge," he repeated aloud, as he paced back and forth through his little living room at night; "but it is not a knowledge of Goethe, of Kant, or Shakespeare; it is not a knowledge of the poets, the scientists, the philosophers, all whom the world holds greatest in the realm of thought; it is a knowledge of Thee, my God, to know whom is life eternal! Men think they can know Homer, Plato, Confucius—and so they can. But they think they can *not* know Thee! And yet Thou art nearer to us than the air we breathe, for Thou art Life! What is there out in the world among the multifold interests of mankind that can equal in importance a demonstrable knowledge of Thee? Not the unproven theories and opinions, the so-called 'authority' of the ancient Fathers, good men though they may have been; not modern pseudo-science, half-truths and relative facts, saturated with materialism and founded on speculation and hypothesis; but real knowledge, a knowledge of Thee that is as demonstrable as the simplest rule in mathe-

matics! Alas! that men should be so mesmerized by their own beliefs as to say Thou canst not be known. Alas! for the burden which such thinkers as Spencer have laid upon the shoulders of stumbling mankind. For God *can* be known, and proven—else is Jesus responsible for the most cruel lie ever perpetrated upon the ignorant, suffering world!"

And so, putting aside a portion of his gold—his by right of inheritance as well as discovery—for the future purchase of such books and aids as he might require, José set his house in order and then plunged into such a search of the Scriptures as rendered him oblivious to all but the immediate interests of Carmen and her foster-parents. The great world again narrowed into the rock-bound confines of little Simití. Each rushing morn that shot its fiery glow through the lofty treetops sank quickly into the hush of noon, while the dust lay thick, white, and hot on the slumbering streets of the ancient town; each setting sun burned with dreamy radiance through the afternoon haze that drew its filmy veil across the seething valley; each night died into a stillness, lonely and awful. Nature changed her garb with monotonous regularity; the drowsing children of this tropic region passed their days in dull torpidity; José saw nothing of it all. At times a villager would bring a tale of grievance to pour into his ears—perhaps a jaguar had pounced upon his dog on his little *finca* across the lake, or a huge snake had lured a suckling pig into its cavernous maw. At times a credulous woman would stop before his open door to dilate upon the thick worms that hung upon the leaves of the *algarrobas* and dropped their wool-like fibers upon the natives as they passed below, causing intermittent fevers. Perhaps an anxious mother would seek him for advice regarding her little son, who had eaten too much dirt, and was suffering from the common "*jipitera*," that made his poor little abdomen protrude so uncomfortably. Again, Rosendo might steal in for a few moments' mysterious, whispered talk about buried treasure, or the fables of El Dorado and Parimé. José had time for them all, though as he listened his thought hovered ever about the green verge of Galilee.

By his side worked Carmen, delving assiduously into the mysteries of mathematics and the modern languages. When the day's work closed for them both, he often asked her to sing to him. And then, leaning back with closed eyes, he would yield himself to the soft dreams which her sweet voice called up from his soul's unfathomed depths. Often they walked together by the lake on a clear night; and on these little excursions, during which they were never beyond Rosendo's watchful eye, José reveled in the girl's airy gaiety and the

spontaneous flow of her sparkling thought. He called her his domestic sunbeam; but in his serious moments—and they were many—he studied her with a wistful earnestness, while he sought to imbibe her great trust, her fearlessness, her unswerving loyalty to the Christ-principle of immanent Good. He would never permit restraint to be imposed upon her, even by Rosendo or his good wife. She knew not what it was to be checked in the freest manifestation of her natural character. But there was little occasion for restraint, for Carmen dwelt ever in the consciousness of a spiritual universe, and to it paid faithful tribute. She saw and knew only from a spiritual basis; and she reaped the rewards incident thereto. His life and hers were such as fools might label madness, a colorless, vegetative existence, devoid of even the elemental things that make mundane existence worth the while. But the appraisal of fools is their own folly. José knew that the torrid days which drew their monotonous length over the little town were witnessing a development in both himself and the child that some day would bear richest fruit. So far from being educated to distrust spiritual power, as are the children of this world, Carmen was growing up to know no other. Instead of the preponderance of her belief and confidence being directed to the material, she was developing the consciousness that the so-called evidence of the physical senses is but mortal thought, the suppositional opposite of the thought of the infinite God who says to mankind: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." José knew that his method of education was revolutionary. But he also knew that it was not wholly his; that the child had really taken this course herself, as if led thereto by a power beyond them both.

And so he watched her, and sought to learn from her as from Christ's own loving and obedient disciple. It was because of his obedience to God that Jesus was able to "prove" Him in the mighty works which we call miracles. He said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Plain enough, indeed! And Carmen did do His will; she kept the very first Commandment; she walked by faith, and not by the sight of the human senses. She had been called an *"hada,"* a witch, by the dull-witted folk of Simití; and some day it would be told that she had a devil. But the Master had borne the same ignominy. And so has every pioneer in Truth, who has dared to lay the axe at the roots of undemonstrable orthodox belief and entrenched human error.

José often trembled for the child when he thought of the probable reception that awaited her in the world without, in

case she ever left Simití. Would her supreme confidence in good ever be weakened by an opposite belief in evil? Would her glorious faith ever be neutralized or counterbalanced by faith in a power opposed to God? He wondered. And sometimes in the fits of abstraction resulting from these thoughts, the girl would steal up to him and softly whisper, "Why, Padre, are you trying to make two and two equal seven?" Then he would laugh with her, and remember how from her algebraic work she had looked up one day and exclaimed, "Padre—why, all evil can be reduced to a common denominator, too—*and it is zero!*"

As recreation from the task of retranslating his Greek Testament, José often read to Carmen portions from the various books of the Bible, or told her the old sacred stories that children so love to hear. But Carmen's incisive thought cut deep into them, and José generally found himself hanging upon the naïve interpretations of this young girl. When, after reading aloud the two opposing accounts of the Creation, as given in the first and second chapters of Genesis, she asked, "But, Padre, why did God change His mind after He made people and gave them dominion over everything?" José was obliged to say that God had not made a mistake, and then gone back afterward to rectify it; that the account of the Creation, as given in Genesis, was not His, but was a record of the dawning upon the human thought of the idea of the spiritual Creation; that the "mist" which went up from the earth was suppositional error; and that the record of the Creation which follows after this was only the human mind's interpretation of the real, spiritual Creation, that Creation which is the ever unfolding of infinite Mind's numberless, perfect ideas. The book of Genesis has been a fetish to human minds; and not until the limitations imposed by its literal interpretation were in a measure removed did the human mentality begin to rise and expand. And when, reading from Isaiah, the grandest of the ancient prophets, the ringing words, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" the child asked him if that did not refer to the very kind of people with whom they had daily intercourse, he had been obliged to say that it did, and that that sort of man was far, very far, from being the man of God's own creating.

"The mist, child, which is mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis, is said to have gone up from the ground. That is, it went up from matter. And so it is typical of materialism, from which all evil comes. The material is the direct opposite of the spiritual. Every bit of evil that men think they can see, or know, or do, comes as testimony of the five material

senses. These might well be called the 'ground' senses. In the book of Genesis, you will notice that the account of the real comes first; then follows the account of its opposite, the unreal man of dust."

"Surely, Padre!" she exclaimed. "The plus sign is followed by a minus sign, isn't it? And the man made of dust is the real man with a minus sign before him."

"The man of dust is the human mind's interpretation of the spiritual man, dear child," returned José. "All human beings are interpretations by the mortal, or human, mind of infinite Mind, God, and His spiritual Creation. The interpretation is made in the human mind, and remains there. The human mind does not see these interpretations outside of itself—it does not see real men, and houses, and trees, outside of itself—but it sees its mental interpretations of God, which it calls men, and houses, and trees, and so on. These things are what we might call *mental concepts.* They are the man and the creation spoken of in the second chapter of Genesis after the mist went up from matter, from the ground, from materialism, resulting in the testimony of the physical senses."

"But, Padre, they are not real—these mental concepts?"

"No. They are illusions. They are formed in mentalities that are themselves wrong interpretations of the infinite Mentality, called God. They are formed without any rule or principle. They are made up of false thoughts, false opinions, beliefs of power opposed to God, beliefs in evil, in sickness, disaster, loss, and death. They are the results of educated and inherited and attached beliefs. They are largely made up of fear-beliefs. The human mentalities see these various beliefs combined in what it calls men and women, houses, animals, trees, and so on, all through the material so-called creation. It is this wrong interpretation that has caused all the suffering and sorrow in the world. And it is this false stuff that the good man Jesus finally said he had overcome."

"How did he do it, Padre?"

"By knowing its nothingness, and by knowing the Allness of his Father, infinite Mind. He called this false stuff a lie about God. And he overcame that lie by knowing the truth—just as you overcome the thought that you cannot solve your algebraic problems by knowing the truth that will and does solve them."

"But, Padre, you said once that Jesus was the best man that ever lived. Was he just a man?"

"Yes, *chiquita.* That is, the human minds all about him saw their mental concepts of him as a man. But he was a human concept that most clearly represented God's idea of

Himself. Mortal, human minds are like window-panes, *chiquita.* When a window-pane is very dirty, very much covered with matter, only a little light can get through it. Some human minds are cleaner, less material, than others, and they let more light through. Jesus was the cleanest mind that was ever with us. He kept letting more and more light—Truth—through himself, until at last all the matter, even the matter composing the material concept that people called his earthly body, dissolved in the strong light, and the people saw him no more. That is called the Ascension."

"And—Padre, don't we have to do that way, too?" she asked earnestly.

"Just so, *chiquita.* We must, every one of us, do exactly as Jesus did. We must wash ourselves clean—wash off the dirty beliefs of power apart from God; we must wash off the beliefs of evil as a power, created in opposition to Him, or permitted by Him to exist and to use His children; we must wash off beliefs of matter as real and created by Him. We must know that matter and all evil, all that decays and passes away, all discord and disease, everything that comes as testimony of the five physical senses, is but a part of the lie about Him, the stuff that has the minus sign before it, making it less than nothing. We must know that it is the suppositional opposite of the real—it is an illusion, seeming to exist, yet evaporating when we try to define it or put a finger on it, for it has no rule or principle by which it was created and by which it continues to exist. Its existence is only in human thought."

No, José assured himself, the Gospels are not "loose, exaggerated, inaccurate, credulous narratives." They are the story of the clearest transparency to truth that was ever known to mortals as a human being. They preserve the life-giving words of him whose mission it was to show mankind the way out of error by giving them truth. They contain the rule given by the great Mathematician, who taught mankind how to solve their life-problems. They tell the world plainly that there seems to exist a lie about God; that every real idea of the infinite Mind seems to have its suppositional opposite in a material illusion. They tell us plainly that resisting these illusions with truth renders them nugatory. They tell us clearly that the man Jesus was so filled with truth that he proved the nothingness of the lie about God by doing those deeds that seemed marvelous in the eyes of men, and yet which he said we could and should do ourselves. And we must do them, if we would throw off the mesmerism of the lie. The human concept of man and the universe must dissolve in the light of the truth that comes through us as transparencies. And it were well if we set about

washing away the dirt of materialism, that the light may shine through more abundantly.

Jesus did not say that his great deeds were accomplished contrary to law, but that they fulfilled the law of God. The law is spiritual, never material. Material law is but human limitation. Ignorance of spiritual law permits the belief in its opposite, material law, or laws of matter. False, human beliefs, opinions, and theories, material speculations and superstitions, parade before the human mind as laws. Jesus swept them all aside by knowing that their supposed power lay only in human acceptance. The human mind is mesmerized by its own false thought. Even Paul at times felt its mesmerism and exclaimed: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." The very idea of good stirs up its opposite in the human consciousness. But Paul rose above it and saw its nothingness. Then he cried: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He recognized the spiritual law that Jesus employed; and with it he overcame the mesmerism of the lie.

"To be a Christian, then," said José, "means not merely taking the name of Christ, and, while morally opposing sin, succumbing to every form of mesmerism that the lie about God exerts. No, it is infinitely more! It means recognizing the nature of God and His Creation, including Man, to be wholly spiritual—and the nature of the material creation and mankind as their opposite, as mental concepts, existing as false interpretations of the spiritual Universe and Man, and as having their place only in the false human consciousness, which itself is a mental activity concerned only with false thought, the suppositional opposite of God's thought. It means taking this Truth, this spiritual law, as we would take a mathematical rule or principle, and with it overcoming sin, sickness, discord of every name and nature, even to death itself. What, oh, what have so-called Christians been doing these nearly two thousand years, that they have not ere this worked out their salvation as Jesus directed them to do? Alas! they have been mesmerized—simply mesmerized by the lie. The millennium should have come long, long ago. It would come to-day if the world would obey Jesus. But it will not come until it does obey him."

Day after day, week after week, month after month, José delved and toiled, studied and pondered. The books which he ordered through the Empresa Alemania, and for which for some two months he waited in trembling anticipation and fear lest they be lost in transit, finally arrived. When Juan brought them up from Bodega Central, José could have wept for joy. Except for the very few letters he had received at rare inter-

vals, these were the only messages that had penetrated the isolation of Simití from the outside world in the two long years of his exile. His starving mind ravenously devoured them. They afforded his first introduction to that fearlessly critical thought regarding things religious which has swept across the world like a tidal wave, and washed away so many of the bulwarks of superstition and ignorance bred of fear of the unknown and supposedly unknowable.

And yet they were not really his first introduction to that thought, for, as he pored over these books, his heart expanded with gratitude to the brusque explorer whom he had met in Cartagena, that genial, odd medley of blunt honesty, unquibbling candor, and hatred of dissimulation, whose ridicule of the religious fetishism of the human mentality tore up the last root of educated orthodox belief that remained struggling for life in the altered soil of his mind.

But, though they tore down with ruthless hand, *these books did not reconstruct.* José turned from them with something of disappointment. He could understand why the trembling heart, searching wearily for truth, turned always from such as they with sinking hope. They were violently iconoclastic—they uprooted—they overthrew—they swept aside with unsparing hand —but they robbed the starving mortal of his once cherished beliefs—they snatched the stale and feebly nourishing bread from his mouth, and gave nothing in return. They emptied his heart, and left it starving. What did it boot to tell a man that the orthodox dream of eternal bliss beyond the gates of death was but a hoax, if no substitute be offered? Why point out the fallacies, the puerile conceptions, the worse than childish thought expressed in the religious creeds of men, if they were not to be replaced by life-sustaining truth? If the demolition of cherished beliefs be not followed by reconstruction upon a sure foundation of demonstrable truth, then is the resulting state of mind worse than before, for the trusting, though deceived, soul has no recourse but to fall into the agnosticism of despair, or the black atheism of positive negation.

"Happily for me," he sighed, as he closed his books at length, "that Carmen entered my empty life in time with the truth that she hourly demonstrates!"

CHAPTER 24

DAYS melted into weeks, and these in turn into months. Simití, drab and shabby, a crumbling and abandoned relique of ancient Spanish pride and arrogance, drowsed undisturbed in the ardent embrace of the tropical sun. Don Jorge returned, unsuccessful, from his long quest in the San Lucas mountains, and departed again down the Magdalena river.

"It is a marvelous country up there," he told José. "I do not wonder that it has given rise to legends. I felt myself in a land of enchantment while I was roaming those quiet mountains. When, after days of steady traveling, I would chance upon a little group of natives hidden away in some dense thicket, it seemed to me that they must be fairies, not real. I came upon the old trail, Padre, the *Camino Real*, now sunken and overgrown, which the Spaniards used. They called it the Panamá trail. It used to lead down to Cartagena. *Hombre!* in places it is now twenty feet deep!"

"But, gold, Don Jorge?"

"Ah, Padre, what quartz veins I saw in that country! *Hombre!* Gold will be discovered there without measure some day! But—*Caramba!* This map which Don Carlos gave me is much in error. I must consult again with him. Then I shall return to Simití." José regretfully saw him depart, for he had grown to love this ruggedly honest soul.

Meantime, Don Mario sulked in his house; nor during the intervening year would he hold anything more than the most formal intercourse with the priest. José ignored him as far as possible. Events move with terrible deliberation in these tropic lands, and men's minds are heavy and lethargic. José assumed that Don Mario had failed in the support upon which he had counted; or else Diego's interest in Carmen was dormant, perhaps utterly passed. Each succeeding day of quiet increased his confidence, while he rounded out month after month in this sequestered vale on the far confines of civilization, and the girl attained her twelfth year. Moreover, as he noted with marveling, often incredulous, mental gaze her swift, unhindered progress, the rapid unfolding of her rich nature, and the increasing development of a spirituality which seemed to raise her daily farther above the plane on which he dwelt, he began to regard the uninterrupted culmination of his plans for her as reasonably assured, if not altogether certain.

Juan continued his frequent trips down to Bodega Central

as general messenger and transportation agent for his fellow-townsmen, meanwhile adoring Carmen from a distance of respectful decorum. Rosendo and Lázaro, relaxing somewhat their vigilance over the girl, labored daily on the little *hacienda* across the lake. The dull-witted folk, keeping to their dismally pretentious mud houses during the pulsing heat of day, and singing their weird, moaning laments in the quiet which reigned over this maculate hollow at night, followed undeviatingly the monotonous routine of an existence which had no other aim than the indulgence of the most primitive material wants.

"Ah, Padre," Rosendo would say of them, "they are so easy! They love idleness; they like not labor. They fish, they play the guitar, they gather fruits. They sing and dance—and then die. Padre, it is sad, is it not?"

Aye, thought the priest, doubly sad in its mute answer to the heartlessly selfish query of Cain. No one, not even the Church, was the keeper of these benighted brothers. He alone had constituted himself their shepherd. And as they learned to love him, to confide their simple wants and childish hopes to him, he came to realize the immense ascendency which the priests of Colombia possess over the simple understanding of the people. An ascendency hereditary and dominant, capable of utmost good, but expressed in the fettering of initiative and action, in the suppression of ambition, and the quenching of every impulse toward independence of thought. How he longed to lift them up from the drag of their mental encompassment! Yet how helpless he was to afford them the needed lustration of soul which alone could accomplish it!

"I can do little more than try to set them a standard of thought," he would muse, as he looked out from the altar over the camellia-like faces of his adult children when he conducted his simple Sunday services. "I can only strive to point out the better things of this life—to tell them of the wonders of invention, of art, of civilization—I can only relate to them tales of romance and achievement, and beautiful stories—and try to omit in the recital all reference to the evil methods, aims, and motives which have manifested in those dark crimes staining the records of history. The world calls them historical incident and fact. I must call them 'the mist that went up from the ground and watered the face of the earth.' "

But José had progressed during his years in Simití. It had been hard—only he could know how hard!—to adapt himself to the narrow environment in which he dwelt. It had been hard to conform to these odd ways and strange usages. But

he now knew that the people's reserve and shyness at first was due to their natural suspicion of him. For days, even weeks, he had known that he was being weighed and watched. And then love triumphed.

It is true, the dull staring of the natives of this unkempt town had long continued to throw him into fits of prolonged nervousness. They had not meant to offend, of course. Their curiosity was far from malicious. But at hardly any hour of the day or night could he look up from his work without seeing dark, inquisitive faces peering in through the latticed window or the open door at him, watchful of the minutest detail of his activity. He had now grown used to that. And he had grown used to their thoughtless intrusion upon him at any hour. He had learned, too, not to pale with nausea when, as was their wont of many centuries, the dwellers in this uncouth town relentlessly pursued their custom of expectorating upon his floor immediately they entered and stood before him. He had accustomed himself to the hourly intrusion of the scavenger pigs and starving dogs in his house. And he could now endure without aching nerves the awful singing, the maudlin wails, the thin, piercing, falsetto howls which rose almost nightly about him in the sacred name of music. For these were children with whom he dwelt. And he was trying to show them that they were children of God.

The girl's education was progressing marvelously. Already José had been obliged to supplement his oral instruction with texts purchased for her from abroad. Her grasp of the English language was his daily wonder. After two years of study she spoke it readily. She loved it, and insisted that her conversations with him should be conducted wholly in it. French and German likewise had been taken up; and her knowledge of her own Castilian tongue had been enriched by the few books which he had been able to secure for her from Spain.

José's anomalous position in Simití had ceased to cause him worry. What mattered it, now that he had endeared himself to its people, and was progressing undisturbed in the training of Carmen? He performed his religious duties faithfully. His people wanted them. And he, in turn, knew that upon his observance of them depended his tenure of the parish.

And he wanted to remain among them, to lead them, if possible, at least a little way along what he was daily seeing to be the only path out of the corroding beliefs of the human mind. He knew that his people's growth would be slow—how slow might not his own be, too! Who could say how unutterably slow would be their united march heavenward! And

yet, the human mind was expanding with wonderful rapidity in these last days. What acceleration had it not acquired since that distant era of the Old Stone Man, when through a hundred thousand years of darkness the only observable progress was a little greater skill in the shaping of his crude flint weapons!

To Padre Diego's one or two subsequent curt demands that Carmen be sent to him, José had given no heed. And perhaps Diego, absorbed in his political activities as the confidential agent of Wenceslas, would have been content to let his claim upon the child lapse, after many months of quiet, had not Don Jorge inadvertently set the current of the man's thought again in her direction.

For Don Jorge was making frequent trips along the Magdalena river. It was essential to his business to visit the various riverine towns and to mingle freely with all grades of people, that he might run down rumors or draw from the inhabitants information which might result in valuable clues anent buried treasure. Returning one day to Simití from such a trip, he regaled José with the spirited recital of his experience on a steamboat which had become stranded on a river bar.

"*Bien,*" he concluded, "the old tub at last broke loose. Then we saw that its engines were out of commission; and so the captain let her drift down to Banco, where we docked. I was forced, not altogether against my will, to put up with Padre Diego. *Caramba!* The old fox! But I had much amusement at his expense when I twitted him about his daughter Carmen, and his silly efforts to get possession of her!"

José shook with indignation. "Good heaven, friend!" he cried, "why can you not let sleeping dogs alone? Diego is not the man to be bearded like that! Would that you had kept away from the subject! And what did you say to him about the girl?"

"*Caramba,* man! I only told him how beautiful she was, and how large for her few years. *Bien,* I think I said she was the most beautiful and well-formed girl I had ever seen. But was there anything wrong in telling the truth, *amigo?*"

"No," replied José bitterly, as he turned away; "you meant no harm. But, knowing the man's brutal nature, and his assumed claim on the girl, why could you not have foreseen possible misfortune to her in dwelling thus on her physical beauty? *Hombre,* it is too bad!"

"*Na, amigo,*" said Don Jorge soothingly, "nothing can come of it. *Bien,* you take things so hard!" But when Don Jorge again set out for the mountains he left the priest's heart filled with apprehension.

A few weeks later came what José had been awaiting, an-

other demand upon him for the girl. Failure to comply with it, said Diego's letter, meant the placing of the case in the hands of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities for action.

Rosendo's face grew hard when he read the note. "There is a way, Padre. Let my woman take the girl and go up the Boque river to Rosa Maria, the clearing of Don Nicolás. It is a wild region, where tapirs and deer roam, and where hardly a man has set foot for centuries. The people of Boque will keep our secret, and she can remain hidden there until—"

"No, Rosendo, that will not do," replied José, shaking his head in perplexity. "The girl is developing rapidly, and such a course would result in a mental check that might spell infinite harm. She and Doña Maria would die to live by themselves up there in that lonely region. What about her studies? And—what would I do?"

"Then do you go too, Padre," suggested Rosendo.

"No, *amigo,* for that would cause search to be instituted by the Bishop, and we certainly would be discovered. But, to take her and flee the country—and the Church—how can I yet? No, it is impossible!" He shook his head dolefully, while his thoughts flew back to Seville and the proud mother there.

"*Bien,* Padre, let us increase our contributions to Don Wenceslas. Let us send him from now on not less than one hundred *pesos oro* each month. Will not that keep him quiet, no matter what Diego says?"

"Possibly," assented José. "At any rate, we will try it." They still had some three thousand *pesos* gold left.

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"Padre," said Rosendo, some days later, as they sat together in the parish house, "what do you think Diego wants of the girl?"

José hesitated. "I think, Rosendo—" he began. But could even a human mind touch such depths of depravity? And yet —"I think," he continued slowly, "that Diego, having seen her, and now speculating on her future beauty of face and form—I think he means to place her in a convent, with the view of holding her as a ready substitute for the woman who now lives with him—"

"*Dios!* And that is my own daughter!" cried Rosendo, springing up.

"Yes—true, Rosendo. And, if I mistake not, Diego also would like to repay the score he has against you, for driving him from Simití and holding the threat of death over him these many years. He can most readily do this by getting Carmen away from you—as he did the other daughter, is it not so?"

Rosendo came and stood before the priest. His face was

strained with fearful anxiety. "Padre," he said in a low voice, "I shall end this matter at once. I go to Banco to-morrow to kill Diego."

"You shall do nothing of the kind!" cried José, seizing his hand. "Why—Rosendo, it would mean your own death, or lifelong imprisonment!"

"And what of that, Padre?" said the old man with awful calmness. "I have nothing that is not hers, even to my life. Gladly would I give it for her. Let me die, or spend my remaining days in the prison, if that will save her. Such a price for her safety would be low."

While he was speaking, Fernando, the town constable, entered. He saluted the men gravely, and drew from his pocket a document to which was attached the Alcalde's official seal.

"Señores," he said with much dignity, as if the majesty of his little office weighed upon him, "I am commanded by Señor, the Alcalde, to exercise the authority reposing in him and place Don Rosendo Ariza under arrest. You will at once accompany me to the *cárcel,*" he added, going up to the astonished Rosendo and laying a hand upon his shoulder.

"Arrest! Me! *Hombre!* what have I done?" cried the old man, stepping back.

"*Bien, amigo,* I do not find it my duty to tell you. The Señor Alcalde hands me the document and commands me to execute it. As for the cause—*Bien,* you must ask him."

"Come," said José, the first to recover from his astonishment, "let us go to him at once." He at any rate had now an opportunity to confront Don Mario and learn what plans the man had been devising these many months.

The Alcalde received the men in his little *patio,* scowling and menacing. He offered them no greeting when they confronted him.

"Don Mario," asked José in a trembling voice, "why have you put this indignity upon our friend, Rosendo? Who orders his arrest?"

"Ask, rather, *Señor Padre,*" replied the Alcalde, full of wrath, "what alone saves you from the same indignity. Only that you are a priest, *Señor Padre, nada más!* His arrest is ordered by Padre Diego."

"And why, if I may beg the favor?" pursued José, though he well knew the sordid motive.

"Why? *Caramba!* Why lay the hands of the law upon those who deprive a suffering father of his child! *Bien, Fernando,*" turning to the constable, "you have done well. Take your prisoner to the *cárcel.*"

"No!" cried Rosendo, drawing back. "No, Don Mario, I will not go to the jail! I will—"

"Caramba!" shouted the Alcalde, his face purple. "I set your trial for to-morrow, in the early morning. But this night you will spend in the jail! *Hombre!* I will see if I am not Alcalde here! And look you, *Señor Padre,* if there is any disturbance, I will send for the government soldiers! Then they will take Rosendo to the prison in Cartagena! And that finishes him!"

José knew that, if Diego had the support of the Bishop, this was no idle threat. Rosendo turned to him in helpless appeal. "What shall I do, Padre?" he asked.

"It is best that you go to the jail to-night, Rosendo," said José with sinking heart. "But, Don Mario," turning menacingly to the Alcalde, "mark you, his trial takes place in the morning, and he shall be judged, not by you alone, but by his fellow-townsmen!"

"Have I not said so, señor?" returned Don Mario curtly, with a note of deep contempt in his voice.

As in most small Spanish towns, the jail was a rude adobe hut, with no furnishings, save the wooden stocks into which the feet of the hapless prisoners were secured. Thus confined, the luckless wight who chanced to feel the law's heavy hand might sit in a torturing position for days, cruelly tormented at night by ravenous mosquitoes, and wholly dependent upon the charity of the townsfolk for his daily rations, unless he have friends or family to supply his needs. In the present instance Don Mario took the extra precaution of setting a guard over his important prisoner.

José, benumbed by the shock and bewildered by the sudden precipitation of events, accompanied Rosendo to the jail and mutely watched the procedure as Fernando secured the old man's bare feet in the rude stocks. And yet, despite the situation, he could not repress a sense of the ridiculous, as his thought dwelt momentarily on the little *opéra bouffe* which these child-like people were so continually enacting in their attempts at self-government. But it was a play that at times approached dangerously near to the tragic. The passions of this Latin offshoot were strong, if their minds were dull and lethargic, and when aroused were capable of the most despicable, as well as the most grandly heroic deeds. And in the present instance, when the fleeting sense of the absurd passed, José knew that he was facing a crisis. Something told him that resistance now would be useless. True, Rosendo might have opposed arrest with violence, and perhaps have escaped. But that would have accomplished nothing for Carmen, the pivot upon which events were turning. José had reasoned that it were better to let the Alcalde play his hand

first, in the small hope that as the cards fell he might more than match his opponent's strength with his own.

"*Na,* Padre, do not worry," said Rosendo reassuringly. "It is for her sake; and we shall have to know, as she does, that everything will come out right. My friends will set me free to-morrow, when the trial takes place. And then"—he drew the priest down to him and whispered low—"we will leave Simití and take to the mountains."

José bent his heavy steps homeward. Arriving at Rosendo's house, he saw the little living room crowded with sympathetic friends who had come to condole with Doña Maria. That placid woman, however, had not lost in any degree her wonted calm, even though her companions held forth with much impassioned declamation against the indignity which had been heaped upon her worthy consort. He looked about for Carmen. She was not with her foster-mother, nor did his inquiry reveal her whereabouts. He smiled sadly, as he thought of her out on the shales, her customary refuge when storms broke. He started in search of her; but as he passed through the *plaza* Manuela Cortez met him. "Padre," she exclaimed, "is the little Carmen to go to jail, too?"

José stopped short. "Manuela—why do you say that?" he asked hurriedly, his heart starting to beat like a trip-hammer.

"Because, Padre, I saw the constable, Fernando, take her into Don Mario's house some time ago."

José uttered an exclamation and started for the house of the Alcalde. Don Mario stood at the door, his huge bulk denying the priest admission.

"Don Mario!" panted José. "Carmen—you have her here?"

Fernando, who had been sitting just within the door, rose and came to his chief's side. José felt his brain whirling. Fernando stepped outside and took his arm. The Alcalde's unlovely face expanded in a sinister leer. "It is permissible to place even a priest in the stocks if he becomes *loco,*" he said significantly.

José tightened his grip upon himself. Fernando spoke quickly:

"It was necessary to take the girl in custody, too, Padre. But do not worry; she is safe."

"But—you have no right to take her—"

"There, *Señor Padre,* calm yourself. What right had you to separate her from her father?"

"Diego is not her father! He lies! And, Don Mario, you have no authority but his—"

"You mistake, *Señor Padre,*" calmly interrupted the Alcalde. "I have a much higher authority."

José stared dully at him. "Whose, then?" he muttered, scarce hearing his own words.

"The Bishop's, *Señor Padre,*" answered Don Mario, with a cruel grin.

"The Bishop! But—the old man—"

"*Na, Señor Padre,* but the Bishop is fairly young, you know. That is, the new one—"

"The new one!" cried the uncomprehending José.

"To be sure, *Señor Padre,* the new Bishop—formerly Señor Don Wenceslas Ortiz."

José beat the air feebly as his hand sought his damp brow. His confused brain became suddenly stagnant.

"*Bien, Señor Padre,*" put in Fernando gently, pitying the priest's agony. "You had not heard the news. Don Mario received letters to-day. The old Bishop of Cartagena died suddenly some days ago, and Don Wenceslas at once received the temporary appointment, until the vacancy can be permanently filled. There is talk of making Cartagena an archbishopric, and so a new bishop will not be appointed until that question is settled. Meanwhile, Don Wenceslas administers the affairs of the Church there."

"And he—he—" stammered the stunned priest.

"To be sure, *Señor Padre,*" interrupted Don Mario, laughing aloud; "the good Don Wenceslas no doubt has learned of the beautiful Carmen, and he cannot permit her to waste her loveliness in so dreary a place as Simití. And so he summons her to Cartagena, in care of his agent, Padre Diego, who awaits the girl now in Banco to conduct her safely down the river. At least, this is what Padre Diego writes me. *Bien,* it is the making of the girl, to be so favored by His Grace!"

José staggered and would have fallen, had not Fernando supported him. Don Mario turned into his house. But as he went he spitefully hurled back:

"*Bien, Señor Padre,* whom have you to blame but yourself? You keep a child from her suffering father—you give all your time to her, neglecting the other poor children of your parish—you send Rosendo into the mountains to search for La Libertad—you break your agreement with me, for you long ago said that we should work together—is it not so? You find gold in the mountains, but you do not tell me. *Na,* you work against me—you oppose my authority as Alcalde—*Bien,* you opposed even the authority of the good Bishop—may he rest with the Saints! You have not made a good priest for Simití, *Señor Padre—na,* you have made a very bad

one! And now you wonder that the good Don Wenceslas takes the girl from you, to bring her up in the right way. *Caramba!* if it is not already too late to save her from your bad teachings!" His voice steadily rose while he talked, and ended in a shrill pipe.

José made as if to reach him; but Fernando held him back. The Alcalde got quickly within the house and secured the door. "Go now to your home, Padre," urged Fernando; "else I shall call help and put you in the stocks, too!"

"But I will enter that house! I will take the child from him!" shouted José desperately, struggling to gain the Alcalde's door.

"Listen to me, Padre!" cried Fernando, holding to the frenzied man. "The little Carmen—she is not in there!"

"Not—in—there! Then where is she, Fernando?—for God's sake tell me!" appealed the stricken priest. Great beads of perspiration stood upon his face, and tears rolled down his drawn cheeks.

Fernando could not but pity him. *"Bien,* Padre," he said gently; "come away. I give you my word that the girl is not in the house of the Alcalde. But I am not permitted to say where she is."

"Then I will search every house in Simití!" cried the priest wildly.

"Na, Padre, you would not find her. Come, I will go home with you." He took José's arm again and led him, blindly stumbling, to the parish house.

By this time the little town was agog with excitement. People ran from house to house, or gathered on the street corners, discussing the event.

"Caramba!" shrilled one wrinkled beldame, "but Simití was very quiet until the *Cura* came!"

"Na, señora," cried another, "say, rather, until that wicked little *hada* was brought here by Rosendo!"

"Cierto, she is an *hada!"* put in a third; "she cured Juanita of goitre by her charms! I saw it!"

"Caramba! she works with the evil one. I myself saw her come from the old church on the hill one day! *Bien,* what was she doing? I say, she was talking with the bad angel which the blessed Virgin has locked in there!"

"Yes, and I have seen her coming from the cemetery. She talks with the buzzards that roost on the old wall, and they are full of evil spirits!"

"And she brought the plague two years ago—who knows?" piped another excitedly.

"Quien sabe? But it was not the real plague, anyway."

"Bueno, and that proves that she caused it, no?"

"Cierto, señora, she cast a spell on the town!"

José sat in his little house like one in a dream. Fernando remained with him. Doña Maria had gone to the jail to see Rosendo. Juan had returned that morning to Bodega Central, and Lázaro was at work on the plantation across the lake. José thought bitterly that the time had been singularly well chosen for the *coup.* Don Mario's last words burned through his tired brain like live coals. In a sense the Alcalde was right. He had been selfishly absorbed in the girl. But he alone, excepting Rosendo, had any adequate appreciation of the girl's real nature. To the stagnant wits of Simití she was one of them, but with singular characteristics which caused the more superstitious and less intelligent to look upon her as an uncanny creature, possessed of occult powers.

Moreover, José had duped Don Mario with assurances of coöperation. He had allowed him to believe that Rosendo was searching for La Libertad, and that he should participate in the discovery, if made. Had his course been wholly wise, after all? He could not say that it had.

But—God above! it was all to save an innocent child from the blackest of fates! If he had been stronger himself, this never could have happened. Or, perhaps, if he had not allowed himself to be lulled to sleep by a fancied security bred of those long months of quiet, he might have been awake and alert to meet the enemy when he returned to the attack. Alas! the devil had left him for a season, and José had laid down "the shield of faith," while he lost himself in the intellectual content which the study of the new books purchased with his ancestral gold had afforded. But evil sleeps not; and with a persistency that were admirable in a better cause, it returned with unbated vigor at the moment the priest was off his guard.

* * * * * *

Dawn broke upon a sleepless night for José. The Alcalde had sent word that Fernando must remain with the priest, and that no visits would be permitted to Rosendo in the jail. José had heard nothing from Carmen, and, though often during the long night he sought to know, as she would, that God's protection rested upon her; and though he sought feebly to prove the immanence of good by knowing no evil, the morning found him drawn and haggard, with corroding fear gnawing his desolate heart. Fernando remained mute; and Doña Maria could only learn that the constable had been seen leading the girl into Don Mario's house shortly after Rosendo's arrest.

At an early hour the people, buzzing with excitement, assembled for the trial, which was held in the town hall, a long, empty adobe house of but a single room, with dirt floor, and a few rough benches. The Alcalde occupied a broken chair at one end of the room. The trial itself was of the simplest order: any person might voice his opinion; and the final verdict was left to the people.

In a shaking voice, his frame tremulous with nervous agitation, Rosendo recounted the birth of the child at Badillo, and the manner of her coming into his family. He told of Diego's appointment to Simití, and of the loss of his own daughter. Waxing more and more energetic as his recital drew out, he denounced Diego as the prince of liars, and as worthy of the violent end which he was certain to meet if ever that renegade priest should venture near enough for him to lay his hands upon him. The little locket was produced, and all present commented on the probable identity of the girl's parents. Many affected to detect a resemblance to Diego in the blurred photograph of the man. Others scouted the idea. Don Mario swore loudly that it could be no other. Diego had often talked to him, sorrowfully, and in terms of deepest affection, about the beautiful woman whose love he had won, but whom his vows of celibacy prevented from making his lawful wife. The Alcalde's recital was dramatic to a degree, and at its close several excitedly attempted to address the multitude at the same time.

Oratory flowed on an ever rising tide, accompanied by much violent gesticulation and expectoration by way of emphasis. At length it was agreed that Diego had been, in times past, a bad man, but that the verbal proofs which he had given the Alcalde were undoubtedly valid, inasmuch as the Bishop stood behind them—and Don Mario assured the people that they were most certainly vouched for by His Grace. The day was almost carried when the eloquent Alcalde, in glowing rhetoric, painted the splendid future awaiting the girl, under the patronage of the Bishop. How cruel to retain her in dreary little Simití, even though Diego's claim still remained somewhat obscure, when His Grace, learning of her talents, had summoned her to Cartagena to be educated in the convent for a glorious future of service to God! Ah, that a like beautiful career awaited all the children of Simití!

José at length forced himself before the people and begged them to listen to him. But, when he opened his mouth, the words stumbled and halted. For what had he to say? To tell these people that he was striving to educate the girl away from them was impossible. To say that he was trying to save

her from the Church would be fatal. And to reiterate that Diego's claim was a fabrication, added nothing of value to the evidence, for what did he know of the child's parentage? He feebly begged them to wait until Diego's claim had been either corroborated or annulled. But no; they had the Bishop's corroboration, and that sufficed. "And, *Caramba!*" cried Don Mario, interrupting the priest in a loud voice, "if we oppose the Bishop, then will he send the government soldiers to us —and you know what—"

"Cielo, yes!" came from the multitude in one voice.

José sank down thoroughly beaten. His hands were tied. The case now rested with her God.

The people drew apart in little groups to discuss the matter. Don Mario's beady eyes searched them, until he was certain of the way the tide was flowing. Then he rose and called for order.

"Bueno, amigos y amigas," he began with immense dignity; "what say you if we sum up the case as follows: The proofs have the support of the Bishop, and show that the girl is the daughter of Padre Diego. Rosendo is guilty of having kept her from her own father, and for that he should be severely punished. Let him be confined in the jail for six months, and be forced to pay to us a fine of one thousand *pesos oro*—"

"Caramba! but he has no such sum," cried the people with mouths agape.

"*Bien,* I say he can get it!" retorted the Alcalde, looking meaningly at José. "And he should pay it for depriving the child of a father's love and the religious instruction which he would have given her!"

José jumped to his feet. "Friends!" he cried, playing his last card. "Will you not remember that more than that amount is due Rosendo for the care of the child? Who will repay him?"

The whimsical, fickle people broke into excited exclamations.

"Cierto!"

"The *Cura* is right!"

"Let Rosendo pay no fine—he has no gold, anyway!"

"Cut down the sentence, Don Mario. We do not like this!"

The Alcalde saw that he had gone a bit too far. "*Bueno,* then," he amended. "We will cancel both the fine and Padre Diego's debt to Rosendo, and the sentence shall be reduced to —what say you all?"

"A month in the jail, Don Mario, no more," suggested one.

An exclamation of approval from the crowd drowned the protest which José sought vainly to voice. Rosendo rose quickly; but Fernando and others seized him.

"*Bien*, it is approved," bawled the Alcalde, waving his thick arms. "Take the prisoner to the *cárcel, Señor Policía*," turning to the constable.

"And the girl, Señor the Alcalde—when will you send her to her father?" called some one.

"Yes, Don Mario, she must be taken to Padre Diego at once," piped a woman's shrill voice.

"*Bien*," shouted the Alcalde, following his words with a long, coarse laugh, "I was wise enough to know what you would decide, and sent the girl down the river last night!"

CHAPTER 25

THE candles and smoky oil lamps of Banco threw a fitful shimmer out upon the great river, casting huge, spectral shadows across its muddy, swirling waters, and seeming rather to intensify the blackness that lay thick and menacing upon its restless bosom. Rivermen who follow their hazardous calling along the Magdalena do not lightly risk the dangers of travel by night in their native canoes, when at any moment a false stroke, a sudden crash against a tossing forest tree, and a cry through the inky blackness, might sound to the straining ears of hushed listeners on the distant banks the elements of another of the mighty river's grim nocturnal tragedies.

But on the night following the trial of Rosendo in distant Simití a canoe stole like a thing ashamed through the heavy shadows along the river's margin, and poked its blunt nose into the ooze at the upper edge of the town. Its two scantily clad *bogas*, steaming with perspiration and flecked with mud from the charged waters, sprang lightly from the frail craft and quickly made it fast to one of the long stilts upon which a ramshackle frame house rested. Then they assisted the third occupant of the canoe, a girl, to alight; and together they wended their way up the slippery bank and toward the town above.

"*Caramba, compadre!*" ejaculated one of the men, stumbling into a deep rut, "it is well you know where we go. *Hombre!* but I travel no more on the river by night. And, *compadre*, we had best ask Padre Diego to offer a candle to the Virgin for our safe arrival, no?"

The other man chuckled. "To be sure, friend Julio. Don Diego has much influence with virgins."

"*Hombre!* I like not his dirty work."

"Bien, amigo, what would you? You are well paid; and besides, you score against that baby-faced priest, José, who drove you out of Simití because you were not married to your woman. You cannot complain, *compadre."*

"Caramba! I have yet to see the color of the *pesos.* I do not much trust your Padre Diego."

"Na, amigo, a bit of rum will put new life into your soaked gizzard. *Cierto,* this trip down the river was a taste of purgatory; but you know we may as well get used to it here, for when we *pobres* are dead who will buy Masses to get us out?"

"Caramba!" muttered the other sullenly, as he stumbled on through the darkness, "but if we have no money the priests will let us burn forever!"

The girl went along with the men silently and without complaint, even when her bare feet slipped into the deep ruts in the trail, or were painfully bruised and cut by the sharp stones and bits of wood that lay in the narrow path. Once she fell. The man addressed as Julio assisted her to her feet. The other broke into a torrent of profane abuse.

"Na, Ricardo," interrupted Julio, "hold your foolish tongue and let the girl alone! You and I have cursed all the way from Simití, but she has made no complaint. She shames me. *Caramba,* I wish I were well out of this business!"

A few minutes later they struck one of the main thoroughfares. Then the men stopped to draw on their cotton shirts and trousers before entering the town. The road was better here, and they made rapid progress. The night was far spent, and the streets were deserted. In the main portion of the town ancient Spanish lamps, hanging uncertainly in their sconces against old colonial houses, threw a feeble light into the darkness. Before one of the better of these houses Julio and the girl were halted by their companion.

"Bien," he said, "it is here that the holy servant of God lives. *Caramba,* but may his *garrafon* be full!"

They entered the open door and mounted the stone steps. On the floor above they paused in the rotunda, and Ricardo called loudly A side door opened and a young woman appeared, holding a lighted candle aloft. Ricardo greeted her courteously. *"El Señor Padre, señorita Ana?"* he said, bowing low. "You will do us the favor to announce our arrival, no?"

The woman stared uncomprehendingly at the odd trio. "The Padre is not here," she finally said.

"Dios y diablo!". cried Ricardo, forgetting his courtesy. "But we have risked our skins to bring him the brat, and he not here to receive and reward us! *Caramba!"*

"But—Ricardo, he is out with friends to-night—he may return at any moment. Who is the girl? And why do you bring her here?" She stepped forward, holding the candle so that its light fell full upon her face. As she did this the girl darted toward her and threw herself into the woman's arms.

"Anita!" she cried, her voice breaking with emotion, "Anita—I am Carmen! Do you not know me?"

The woman fell back in astonishment. "Carmen! What! The little Carmen, my father's—"

"Yes, Anita, I am padre Rosendo's Carmen—and yours!"

Ana clasped the girl in her arms. *"Santa Maria,* child! What brings you here, of all places?"

Ricardo stepped forward to explain. "As you may see, señorita, it is we who have brought her here, at the command of her father, Padre Diego."

"Her father!"

"Yes, señorita. And, since you say he is not in, we must wait until he returns."

The woman stood speechless with amazement. Carmen clung to her, while Ricardo stood looking at them, with a foolish leer on his face. Julio drew back into the shadow of the wall.

"Bien, señorita," said Ricardo, stepping up to the child and attempting to take her arm, "we will be held to account for the girl, and we must not lose her. *Caramba!* For then would the good Padre damn us forever!"

Carmen shrank away from him. Julio emerged swiftly from the shadow and laid a restraining hand on Ricardo. The woman tore Carmen from his grasp and thrust the girl behind herself. *"Cierto,* friend Ricardo, we are all responsible for her," she said quickly. "But you are tired and hungry—is it not so? Let me take you to the *cocina,* where you will find roast pig and a bit of red rum."

"Rum!" The man's eyes dilated. *"Caramba!* my throat is like the ashes of purgatory!"

"Come, then," said the woman, holding Carmen tightly by the hand and leading the way down the steps to the kitchen below. Arriving there, she lighted an oil lamp and hurriedly set out food and a large *garrafon* of Jamaica rum.

"There, *compadre,* is a part of your reward. And we will now wait until Padre Diego arrives, is it not so?"

While the men ate and drank voraciously, interpolating their actions at frequent intervals with bits of vivid comment on their river trip, the woman cast many anxious glances toward the steps leading to the floor above. From time to

time she replenished Ricardo's glass, and urged him to drink. The man needed no invitation. Physical exhaustion and short rations while on the river had prepared him for just what the woman most desired to accomplish, and as glass after glass of the fiery liquor burned its way down his throat, she saw his scant wit fading, until at last it deserted him completely, and he sank into a drunken torpor. Then, motioning to Julio, who had consumed less of the rum, she seized the senseless Ricardo by the feet, and together they dragged him out into the *patio* and threw him under a *platano* tree.

"But, señorita—" began Julio in remonstrance, as thoughts of Diego's wrath filtered through his befuddled brain.

"Not a word, *hombre!*" she commanded, turning upon him. "If you lay a hand upon this child my knife shall find your heart!"

"But—my pay?"

"How much did Padre Diego say he would give you?" she demanded.

"Three *pesos oro*—and rations," replied the man thickly.

"Wait here, then, and I will bring you the money."

Still retaining Carmen's hand, she mounted the steps, listening cautiously for the tread of her master. Reaching the rotunda above, she drew Carmen into the room from which she had emerged before, and, bidding her conceal herself if Diego should arrive, took her wallet and hastily descended to where the weaving Julio waited.

"There, *amigo,*" she said hurriedly, handing him the money. "Now do you go—at once! And do not remain in Banco, or Padre Diego will surely make you trouble. Your life is not safe here now. Go!" She pointed to the door; and Julio, impressed with a sense of his danger, lost no time in making his exit.

Returning to Carmen, the woman seated herself and drew the girl to her. "Carmen, child!" she cried, trembling, as her eyes searched the girl. "Tell me why you are here!"

"I do not know, Anita dear," murmured the girl, nestling close to the woman and twining an arm about her neck; "except that day before yesterday the Alcalde put padre Rosendo into the jail—"

"Into the jail!"

"Yes, Anita dear. And then, when I was going to see him, Fernando ran out of Don Mario's house and told me I must go in and see the Alcalde. Julio Gomez and this man Ricardo were there talking with Don Mario in the *patio.* Then they threw a *ruana* over me and carried me out through the *patio* and around by the old church to the Boque trail. When we

got to the trail they made me walk with them to the Inanea river, where they put me into a canoe. They paddled fast, down to the Boque river; then to the Magdalena; and down here to Banco. They did not stop at all, except when steamboats went by—oh, Anita, I never saw a steamboat before! What big, noisy things they are! But Padre José had often told me about them. And when the big boats passed us they made me lie down in the canoe, and they put the *ruana* over me and told me if I made any noise they would throw me into the river. But I knew if I just kept still and knew—really *knew*—that God would take care of me, why, He would. And, you see, He did, for He brought me to you." A tired sigh escaped her lips as she laid her head on the woman's shoulder.

"But—oh, *Santa Maria!*" moaned the woman, "you are not safe here! What can I do?—what can I do?"

"Well, Anita dear, you can know that God is here, can't you? I knew that all the way down the river. And, oh, I am so glad to see you! Why, just think, it is eight years since you used to play with me! And now we will go back to Simití, will we not, Anita?"

"Pray to the Virgin to help us, child! You may have influence with her—I have none, for my soul is lost!"

"Why, Anita dear, that is not true! You and I are both God's children, and He is right here with us. All we have to do is to know it—just really *know* it."

"But, tell me, quick—Diego may be here any moment—why did he send Ricardo for you?"

The girl became very serious. "Anita dear, Padre Diego says I am his child."

"What!"

"Yes—his daughter—that he is my father. But—is it really so, Anita?"

"*Madre de Dios!*" cried the woman. "What a beast!—what a beast! He saw you in Simití when he was last there—and you are now a beautiful— No, child, you are not his daughter! The wretch lies—he is a sink of lies! He is rotten with sin! Oh, *Dios!*"

"Why, no, Anita dear, he is not a beast—we must love him, for he is God's child, too," said Carmen, patting the woman's wet cheek with her soft hand.

"He!—God's child!" She broke into a shrill of laughter. "*Carita*, he is Satan himself! You do not know him!"

"I don't mean that what you think you see is God's child, Anita dear; but that what you think you see stands for God's child, and isn't real. And if we know that, why, we will see the real child of God—the real man—and not what you call a beast."

Ana apparently did not hear. Her thought was with the future. Carmen looked about the room. "Oh, Anita," she exclaimed, "what a beautiful place, and what beautiful things you have!" She rubbed the tile floor with her bare foot. "Why, Anita dear, it is just like the palaces Padre José has told me about!" She walked around the room, touching the various toilet articles on the dresser, passing her hands carefully over the upholstered chairs, and uttering exclamations of wonder and delight. "Anita—Anita dear! Why, it is a palace! Oh! oh! oh!"

The woman looked up with a wan smile. *"Chiquita,* they are nothing. They are all cheap trinkets—nothing compared with what there is in the big world beyond us. You poor dear, you have lived all your life in miserable little Simití, and you haven't the slightest idea of what there is in the world!"

"But, Anita dear, Simití is beautiful," the girl protested.

"Beautiful!" The woman laughed aloud. "My dear, simple little girl! You have seen only this poor room, and you think it wonderful. I have been to Barranquilla and Cartagena with Padre Diego, and have seen houses a thousand times more beautiful than this. And yet, even those are nothing to what there is in the world outside."

Carmen went to the bed and passed her hand over the white counterpane. "Anita—why, is this—is this your—"

"Yes, *chiquita,* it is my bed. You have never seen a real bed, poor little thing."

"But—" the child's eyes were wide with wonder—"it is so soft—you sink way into it—oh, so soft—like the heron's feathers! I didn't sleep at all in the canoe—and I am so tired."

"You blessed lamb!" cried the woman, springing up and clasping the girl in her arms. "But—what can I do? When he returns, he may come right up here! *Santa Maria,* help me!—what shall I do?"

"Anita—let me sleep in your bed—it is so soft—but—" looking down dubiously at her muddy feet.

"Never mind them, child." The woman's face had set in grim determination. She went to the dresser and took out a small stiletto, which she quickly concealed in the bosom of her dress. "Get right in, just as you are! I will take care of Diego, if he comes! *Santa Maria,* I will—"

"Anita dear," murmured the girl, sinking down between the white sheets, "you and I will just *know* that God is everywhere, and that He will take care of us, and of Padre Diego too." With a sigh of contentment the child closed her eyes. "Anita dear," she whispered softly, "wasn't He good to bring me right to you? And to-morrow we will go back to Simití—

and to padre Rosendo—and Padre José—and—and Cantar-las-horas—you haven't seen him for such a long time—such a long—long—Anita dear, I—love—you—"

The child dropped asleep, just as a heavy step fell outside the door. Ana sprang up and extinguished the lamp, then went quickly out into the rotunda. Padre Diego was standing on the top step, puffing and weaving unsteadily. The woman hurried to him and passed an arm about his waist.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in a tone of feigned solicitation. "I feared you had met with an accident! My heart beats like the patter of rain! Why do you stay out so late and cause me worry?"

The bloated face of the man leered like a Jack-o'-lantern. "Spiritual retreat, my love—spiritual retreat," he muttered thickly. "Imbibing the spirits, you know." He laughed heavily at his coarse joke.

The woman gave him a look of inexpressible disgust. "But you are home safe, at any rate," she said in a fawning voice; "and my fear is quieted. Come now, and I will help you into bed. Not in there!" she cried, as he lurched toward the door of the room where Carmen lay; "in your own room to-night!"

He swayed to and fro before her, as she stood with her back against the door.

"*Nombre de Dios!*" he muttered, "but you grow daily more unkind to your good Padre! *Bien,* it is well that I have a fresh little housekeeper coming!" He made again as if to enter the room. The woman threw her arms about his neck.

"Padre dear," she appealed, "have you ceased to love your Anita? She would spend this night alone; and can you not favor her this once?"

"*Caramba!*" he croaked in peevish suspicion, "but I think you have a paramour in there. *Bien,* I will go in and shrive his wicked soul!"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you!" cried the desperate woman, her hand stealing to the weapon concealed in her dress. "Pepito came this evening with the case of *Oporto* which you ordered long ago from Spain. I put it in your study, for I knew you would want to sample it the moment you returned."

"*Caramba!*" he cried, turning upon her, "why do you not tell me important things as soon as I arrive? I marvel that you did not wait until morning to break this piece of heavenly news! *Bien,* come to the study, and you shall open a bottle for me. *Dios!* but my throat is seared with Don Antonio's vile rum! My parched soul panteth for the wine of the gods that flows from sunny Spain! *Caramba,* woman, give yourself haste!"

Suffering himself to be led by her, he staggered across the rotunda and into the room where long before he had entertained for a brief hour Don Jorge and the priest José. Ana quickly broke the neck of a bottle of the newly arrived wine and gave him a generous measure.

"Ah, God in heaven!" murmured the besotted priest, sinking into a chair and sipping the beverage; "it is the nectar of Olympus—triple distilled through tubes of sunlight and perfumed with sweet airs and the smiles of voluptuous *houris!* Ah, Lord above, you are good to your little Diego! Another sip, my lovely Ana—and bring me the cigarettes. And come, fat lass, do you sit beside me and twine your graceful arms about my neck, while your soft breath kisses my old cheek! Ah, *Dios,* who would not be human! *Caramba!* the good God may keep His heaven, if He will but give me the earth!"

Ana drew his head against her bosom and murmured hypocritical words of endearment in his ear, while she kept his glass full. Diego babbled like a child. He nodded; struggled to keep awake; and at length fell asleep with his head on her shoulder. Then she arose, and, assured that he would be long in his stupor, extinguished the light and hurried to her own room.

Carmen was sleeping peacefully. The woman bent over her with the lighted candle and looked long and wistfully. "Ah, *Santa Maria!*" she prayed, "if you will but save her, you may do what you will with me!"

Tears flowed freely down her cheeks as she turned to the door and threw the bolt. Coming back to the bed, she again bent over the sleeping girl. *"Santa Virgen!"* she murmured, "how beautiful! Like an angel! *Dios mío*—and that beast, he has seen her, and he would—ah, *Dios!"*

Going again to the dresser, she took from a drawer a sandalwood rosary. Then she returned to the bed and knelt beside the child. "Blessed Virgin," she prayed, while her hot tears fell upon the beads, "I am lost—lost! Ah, I have not told my beads for many years—I cannot say them now! *Santa Virgen,* pray for me—pray for me—and if I kill him to-morrow, tell the blessed Saviour that I did it for the child! Ah, *Santa Virgen,* how beautiful she is—how pure—what hair—she is from heaven—*Santa Virgen,* you will protect her?" She kissed the cross repeatedly. *"Madre de Dios*—she is so beautiful, so pure—"

Carmen moved slightly, and the woman rose hastily from her knees. "Anita dear," murmured the child, "Jesus waked Lazarus—out of his—sleep. Anita, why do you not come? I am waiting for you."

"Yes, child, yes! But—*Dios mío!*" she murmured when Carmen again slept, "I am too wicked to sleep with so pure an angel!—no, I can not! I must not!"

She spread a light shawl upon the tile floor near the window and lay down upon it, drawing a lace *mantilla* over her face to protect it from the mosquitoes. *"Santa Virgen,"* she murmured repeatedly, "pray the blessed Saviour to protect her to-morrow—pray for her, *Madre de Dios*—pray for her!"

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The piercing shriek of a steamboat whistle roused the woman just as the first harbingers of dawn spread over the river a crimson flush that turned it into a stream of blood. The child was asleep. Ana bent over her and left a kiss on her forehead. Then she stole out of the room and into the study. Padre Diego lay sunk in his chair like a monster toad. The woman threw him a look of utter loathing, and then hastily descended into the *patio.* Ricardo lay under the *platano* tree, sleeping heavily. She roused him with a kick.

"Up, man!" she cried, shaking him by the shoulder. "Padre Diego sends you this money, and bids you go. He is well satisfied with your work." She held out a roll of *pesos.*

The man, after much vigorous persuasion, got heavily to his feet. *"Caramba, señorita!"* he muttered in a dazed voice. "That last *tragito*—it was a bit too much, no? But—*Bien,* I would see the good Padre. *Caramba,* my poor head! What rum! But, señorita, do me the great favor to ask the good Padre to see me one little moment. I must deliver this letter to him." He fumbled in his wallet and drew out an envelope.

"He will not see you, Ricardo. He—"

"Caramba!" ejaculated the man loudly, as his senses returned. "But I believe there is something wrong here! *Bien,* now I shall see the Padre! I am responsible to him!" He pushed the woman aside and entered the house.

Ana started after him, and seized his arm. A scuffle ensued, and Ricardo's voice was loud and shrill as they reached the stairs. The woman clung to him desperately. "Ricardo—anything you ask—double the amount, if you will go! Leave the house—I will tell the Padre—I will give him the letter—"

"Caramba, but I will see him myself!" shouted the light-headed Ricardo.

"Dios y diablo!" A heavy voice rolled down from above. *"Bien, enamorada,* is this the paramour whom you hid in your room last night? *Caramba,* you might have chosen a handsomer one!"

Ana sank down with a moan and buried her face in her hands. Diego heavily descended the stairs. "Ha, Ricardo!"

he exclaimed, recognizing the man. *"Bien,* so it is you! And the girl?"

"I do not know, Padre," cried the man excitedly. "Señorita Ana, she made me drunk last night. I brought the girl—I waited for you, but the señorita—"

"Caramba, I understand!" replied Diego, turning to the woman.

Ana had risen and was making for the stairs. Diego sprang to her and seized her by the wrist. With her free hand she drew the stiletto from her bosom and raised it to strike. Ricardo saw the movement, and threw himself upon her.

"Dios!" cried Diego, as Ricardo felled the woman and wrenched the weapon from her grasp. "My pretty angel, you have the venom of a serpent! Sly wench! did you think to deceive your doting Padre? But—*Dios nos guarde!"*

Carmen, awakened by the noise, had left her bed, and now stood at the head of the stairs, looking with dilated eyes at the strange scene being enacted below.

Silence fell upon the group. Ana lay on the ground, her eyes strained toward the girl. Ricardo bent over her, awaiting his master's command. He knew now that she had forever lost her power over the priest. Diego stood like a statue, his eyes riveted upon Carmen. The girl looked down upon them from the floor above with an expression of wonder, yet without fear.

Diego was the first to find his voice. "Ah, my pretty one!" he wheedled. "My lovely daughter! At last you come to your lonely padre! Wait for me, *hermosísima!"* He puffed painfully up the steps.

"Carmen!—run!—run! Don't let him come near you—!" screamed Ana in a voice of horror. Ricardo clapped his hand heavily over her mouth.

But the child did not move. Diego reached her and seized her hand.

"Carísima!" he panted, feasting his eyes upon her, while a thrill passed through his coarse frame. *"Madre de Dios,* but you have grown beautiful! Don Mario was right—you are surely the most voluptuous object in human form that has ever crossed my path. *Bien,* the blessed God is still good to his little Diego!"

He started away with her, but was detained by the loud voice of Ricardo.

"Bien, Padre, my pay!"

"Cierto, hombre!" exclaimed Diego. "I was about to forget. But—a father's joy—ah! *Bien,* come to me to-morrow—"

"Na, Señor Padre, but to-day—now! I have risked my life —and I have a wife and babes! You will pay me this minute!"

"Caramba, ugly beast, but I will consign you to hell! *Maldito!* get you gone! There are more convenient seasons than this for your business!" And, still holding tightly to the girl's hand, he led her into the study.

The woman turned upon Ricardo with the fury of a tiger. "See now what you have done!" she screamed. "This will cost your life, for you have put into his dirty hands the soul of an angel, and he will damn it! *Santa Virgen!* If you had only taken the money I brought you—"

"Demon-tongue, I will take it now!" He snatched the roll of bills from her hand and bolted through the door. With a low moan the woman sank to the ground, while oblivion drew its sable veil across her mind.

Reaching the study, Diego pushed Carmen into the room and then followed, closing the door after him and throwing the iron bolt. Turning about, he stood with arms akimbo upon his bulging hips and gazed long and admiringly at the girl as she waited in expectant wonder before him. A smile of satisfaction and triumph slowly spread over his coarse features. Then it faded, and his heavy jowls and deep furrows formed into an expression, sinister and ominous, through which lewdness, debauchery, and utter corruption looked out brazenly, defiantly, into the fair, open countenance of the young girl before him. A sense of weariness and dull pain then seemed to follow. He shook his heavy head and passed a hand across his brow, as if to brush aside the confusion left by the previous night's potations.

"Madre de Dios!" he muttered, falling heavily into a chair, "but had I known you were here, little rosebud, I should have tried to keep sober." He reached out to grasp her; but she eluded him and went quickly to the open window, where she stood looking down into the street below. The morning sunlight, streaming into the room, engulfed her in its golden flood and transmuted the child of earth into a creature divinely radiant, despite the torn gown and stains of river travel.

"Bien, carísima," the man wheedled in a small, caressing voice, "where is your greeting to your glad padre? *Dios mío!"* he muttered, his eyes roving over her full figure, "but the Virgin herself was never more lovely! Come, daughter," he purred, extending his arms; "come to a father's heart that now, praise the Saints! shall ache no more for its lost darling."

The girl faced about and looked at him for a few moments. What her glance conveyed, the man was utterly incapable of understanding. Then she drew up a chair that stood near the window, and sinking into it, buried her face in her hands.

"Caramba, my smile of heaven! but why weep?" chirped

Diego, affecting surprise. "Is it thus you celebrate your home-coming? Or are these, perchance, fitting tears of joy? *Bien*, your padre's doting heart itself weeps that its years of loneliness are at last ended." He held the sleeve of his gown to his eyes and sniffed affectedly.

The girl looked up quickly. "I am not weeping," she said.

"*Bien*, and what then?" he pursued.

"I was just knowing," she answered slowly, "that I was not afraid—that God was everywhere, even right here—and that He would not let any harm come to me."

Diego's eyes widened. Then he burst into a coarse laugh. "*Hombre!* and you ask Him to protect you from your adoring father! Come here, little wench. You are in your own home. Why be afraid?" He again held out his arms to her.

"I am not afraid—now," she answered softly. "But—I do not think God will let me come to you. If you were really my father, He would."

The man's mouth gaped in astonishment. A fleeting sense of shame swept through his festering mind. Then the lustful meanness of his corrupted soul welled up anew, and he laughed brutally. The idea was delightfully novel; the girl beautifully audacious; the situation piquantly amusing. He would draw her out to his further enjoyment. "So," he observed parenthetically, "I judge you are on quite familiar terms with God, eh?"

"Very," she replied, profoundly serious.

The joke was excellent, and he roared with mirth. "*Bueno, pues!*" he commented, reaching over and uncorking with shaking hand the bottle that stood on the table. Then, filling a glass, "Suppose you thank Him for sending his little Diego this estimable wine and your own charming self, eh? Then tell me what He says." Whereat he guffawed loudly and slapped his bulging sides.

The girl had already bowed her head again in her hands. A long pause ensued. Diego's beady eyes devoured the beautiful creature before him. Then he waxed impatient. "*Bien*, little Passion flower," he interrupted, "if you have conveyed to Him my infinite gratitude, perhaps He will now let you come to me, eh?"

Carmen looked up. A faint smile hovered upon her lips. "I have thanked Him, Padre—for you and for me," she said; "for you, that you really are His child, even if you don't know it; and for me that I know He always hears me. That was what the good man Jesus said, you know, when he waked Lazarus out of the death-sleep. Don't you remember? And so I kept thanking Him all the way down the river."

Diego's eyes bulged as if they would pop from his head, and his mouth fell open wide, but no sound issued therefrom. The girl went on quietly:

"I was not afraid on the river, Padre. And I was not afraid to come in here with you. I knew, just as the good man Jesus did at the tomb of Lazarus, that God had heard me—He just couldn't be God if He hadn't, you know. And then I remembered what the good man said about not resisting evil; for, you know, if we resist evil we make it real—and we never, *never* can overcome anything real, can we? So I resisted evil with good, just as Jesus told us to do. I just *knew* that God was everywhere, and that evil was unreal, and had no power at all. And so the *bogas* didn't hurt me coming down the river. And you—you will not either, Padre."

She stopped and smiled sweetly at him. Then, very seriously:

"Padre, one reason why I was not afraid to come in here with you was that I thought God might want to talk to you through me, and I could help you. You need help, you know."

The man settled back in his chair and stared stupidly at her. His face expressed utter consternation, confusion, and total lack of comprehension. Once he muttered under his breath, *"Caramba!* she is surely an *hada!"* But Carmen did not hear him. Absorbed in her mission, she went on earnestly:

"You know, Padre, we are all channels through which God talks to people—just like the *asequia* out there in the street through which the water flows. We are all channels for divine love—so Padre José says."

The priest sat before her like a huge pig, his little eyes blinking dully, and his great mouth still agape.

"We are never afraid of real things, Padre, you know; and so I couldn't be afraid of the real 'you,' for that is a child of God. And the other 'you' isn't real. We are only afraid of our wrong thoughts. But such thoughts are not really ours, you know, for they don't come from God. But," she laughed softly, "when I saw you coming up the steps after me this morning—well, lots of fear-thoughts came to me—why, they just seemed to come pelting down on me like the rain. But I wouldn't listen to them. I turned right on them, just as I've seen Cucumbra turn on a puppy that was nagging him, and I said, 'Here, now, I know what you are; I know you don't come from God; and anything that doesn't come from God isn't really anything at all!' And so they stopped pelting me. The good man Jesus knew, didn't he? That's why he said so often, 'Be not afraid.'"

She paused again and beamed at him. Her big eyes sparkled, and her face glowed with celestial light. Diego raised a heavy

arm and, groping for the bottle, eagerly drained another glass of wine.

"You think that wine makes you happy, don't you, Padre?" she observed, watching him gulp down the heavy liquor. "But it doesn't. It just gives you what Padre José calls a false sense of happiness. And when that false sense passes away—for everything unreal has just *got* to pass away—why, then you are more unhappy than you were before. Isn't it so?"

The astonished Diego now regained his voice. "*Caramba,* girl!" he ejaculated, "will you rein that runaway tongue!"

"No, Padre," she replied evenly, "for it is God who is talking to you. Don't you hear Him? You ought to, for you are a priest. You ought to know Him as well as the good man Jesus did. Padre, can you lay your hands on the sick babies and cure them?"

The man squirmed uncomfortably for a moment, and then broke into another brutal laugh. "Sick babies! *Caramba!* but we find it easier to raise new babies than to cure sick ones! But—little *hada! Hombre!* do *hadas* have such voluptuous bodies, such plump legs! *Madre de Dios,* girl, enough of your preaching! Come to me quick! I hunger for you! Come!"

"No, Padre," she answered quietly, "I do not want to come to you. But I want to talk to you—"

"*Dios y diablo!* enough of your gab! *Caramba!* with a Venus before me do you think I yearn for a sermon? *Hombre!* delay it, delay it—"

"Padre," she interrupted, "you do not see *me.* You are looking only at your bad thoughts of me."

"Ha! my thoughts, eh?" His laugh resembled the snort of an animal.

"Yes, Padre—and they are *very* bad thoughts, too—they don't come from God, and you are *so* foolish to let them use you the way you do. Why do you, Padre? for you don't have to. And you know you see around you only the thoughts that you have been thinking. Why don't you think good thoughts, and so see only good things?"

"Now Mary bless my soul!" he exclaimed in mock surprise. "Can it be that I don't see a plump little witch before me, but only my bad thoughts, eh? Ha! ha! *Caramba!* that is good! *Bien,* then," he coaxed, "come to your poor, deluded padre and let him learn that you are only a thing of thought, and not the most enchanting little piece of flesh that ever caused a Saint to fall!"

The girl sat silent before him. Her smile had fled, and in its place sadness and pity were written large upon her wistful face.

"Come, my little bundle of thought," he coaxed, holding out his fat, hairy arms.

"No, Padre," the girl answered firmly.

"*Na,* then, still afraid, eh?" he taunted, with rising anger.

"No, Padre; to be afraid would mean that I didn't understand God."

"Ha! Then come to me and prove that you do understand Him, eh?" he suggested eagerly. "*Caramba!* why do you sit there like a mummy? Are you invoking curses on the bald pate of your desolate father?"

"No, Padre; I am thanking God all the time that He is here, and that He will not let you hurt me."

The man's lust-inflamed eyes narrowed and the expression on his evil face became more sinister. "*Maldita!*" he growled, "will you come hither, or must I—"

"No." She shook her head slowly, and her heavy curls glistened in the sunlight. "No, Padre, God will not let me come to you."

Panting and cursing softly, the man got slowly to his feet. "*Madre de Dios!*" he muttered; "then we will see if your God will let me come to you!"

Carmen rose and stood hesitant. Her lips moved rapidly, though no sound came from them. They were forming the words of the psalmist, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." It was a verse José had taught her long since, when his own heart was bursting with apprehension.

Diego stumbled heavily toward the child. She turned quickly as if to flee. He thrust out his hand and clutched her dress. The flimsy calico, frayed and worn, tore its full length, and the gown fell to the floor. She stopped and turned to face the man. Her white body glistened in the clear sunlight like a marble statue.

"*Por el amor de Dios!*" ejaculated the priest, straightening up and regarding her with dull, blinking eyes. Then, like a tiger pouncing upon a fawn, he seized the unresisting girl in his arms and staggered back to his chair.

"*Caramba! Caramba!*" he exclaimed, holding her with one arm about her waist, and with his free hand clumsily pouring another glass of wine. "Only a thing of thought, eh? *Madre de Dios! Bien,* pretty thought, drink with me this thought of wine!" He laughed boisterously at his crude wit, and forced the glass between her lips.

"I—am not afraid—I am not afraid," she whispered, drinking. "It cannot hurt me—nor can you. God *is* here!"

"Hurt you!" he panted, setting down the glass and mopping

his hot brow, as he settled back into the chair again. *"Caramba!* who hurts when he loves?"

"You—do—not—love—me, Padre!" she gasped under his tight clutch. "You have—only a wrong thought—of me—of love—of everything!"

"Bien—but you love me, pretty creature, is it not so?" he mocked, holding up her head and kissing her full on the mouth.

"I—I love the *real* 'you'—for that is God's image," she murmured, struggling to hold her face away from his fetid breath. "But—I do not—love the way that image is—is translated—in your human mind!"

"Caramba!" he threw himself back and gave noisy vent to his risibility. *"Chiquita mía!* What grand language! Where did you learn it?"

For the moment the girl seemed to forget that she was in the fell clutches of a demon incarnate. Her thought strayed back to little Simití, to Cucumbra, to Cantar-las-horas, to—ah, was *he* searching for her now? And would he come?—

"It was Padre José; he taught me," she whispered sadly.

"Padre José! *Maldito!* The curse of God blast him, the monkey-faced *mozo! Caramba!* but he will teach you no more! You have a new master now to give you a few needed lessons, *señorita mía,* and—"

"Padre Diego!" her tense voice checked further expression of his low thought. "You have no power to curse anything! You have no power to harm me, or to teach me anything! God *is* here! He *will* protect me! He keeps all them that love Him!" She gasped again as his clutch tightened about her.

"Doubtless, my lily. *Caramba!* your skin is like the velvet!" He roughly drew the girl up on his knees. "To be sure He will protect you, my *mariposa.* And He is using me as the channel, you see—just as you said a few moments ago, eh?" His rude laugh again echoed through the room.

"He is not—using you—at all!" she panted. "Evil thoughts are—are using you. And all—they can do—is to kill themselves—and you!"

"Madre Maria! Is such a sad fate in store for me, my beautiful *hada?"* He chuckled and reached out again for the bottle. "Another little thought of wine, my love. It's only a thought, you know. Ha! ha! I must remember to tell Don Antonio of this!—*Maldita!"*

His clumsy movement had upset the bottle. Struggling to save its contents, he relaxed his hold on Carmen. Like a flash she wormed her supple body out under his arm, slid to the floor, and gained the window.

"Dios y diablo! Maldita! Maldita!" shrilled Diego, aflame with wrath. "Cursed wench! when I lay these hands again on you—!"

Struggling to his feet, he made for the girl. But at the first step the light rug slid along the smooth tiles beneath his uncertain tread. He threw out an arm and sought to grasp the table. But as he did so, his foot turned under him. There was a sharp, snapping sound. With a groan the heavy man sank to the floor.

For a moment Carmen stood as if dazed. Diego lay very still. Then the girl picked up her torn dress and approached him carefully. "It was his bad thoughts," she whispered; "he slipped on them; they threw him! I knew it—I just *knew* it!"

Passing to one side, she gained the door, threw back the bolt, and hurried out into the rotunda. Crouched on the floor, the stiletto clasped in her hand, sat Ana, her face drenched with tears, and her chest heaving. When she saw the girl she sprang to her feet.

"Carmen! Ah, *Dios!* your dress!— *Madre Maria!* I could not save you; I could not break through the heavy door; but I can punish him!" She burst into a flood of tears and started into the room.

"No, Anita!" cried the girl, throwing herself into the woman's arms. "He is punished! He did not hurt me—God would not let him! Look! Anita, look!" pointing to the body on the floor.

The woman stopped abruptly. "Carmen!" she whispered in awed tones, "did God strike him dead?"

"I don't know, Anita—but come! No!" clinging to the woman's skirt; "Anita dear, do not go in there! Leave him! Come away with me!"

The woman's eyes were wild, her hair loose and disheveled. *"Caramba!"* she cried, "but we will make sure that the beast is dead before we go! And if we leave this blade in his heart, it may be a warning to others of his kind!"

"No, Anita—no! God will not let you kill him! You must not! Your murder-thoughts will kill you if you do! Come! Listen—it is a steamboat whistle! Oh, Anita—if it is going up the river—we can take it—"

Ana hesitated. "But—leave him? He may—"

"Yes, Anita, yes; leave him with God!" pleaded the girl excitedly. "Come away, Anita—"

"But where, child?" asked the bewildered woman.

"To Simití!"

"Simití! Never! Why—why, my father would kill me!"

"No, Anita dear; he loves you; he prays for you; he wants

you! Oh, Anita, come! It is right—it is just what God has planned, I know! Pin my dress together, and then hurry!"

The woman moved as if in a cloud. Mechanically she descended the stairs and left the house, her hand tightly clasped by Carmen. Dully she suffered herself to be led hurriedly to the river. A boat, up-bound, was just docking. The captain stood leaning over the rail and shouting his commands. Ana recognized him. It was Captain Julio.

"*Loado sea Dios!*" murmured the weeping woman, hurrying up the gang plank with the child. She hastened past the astonished passengers to the captain and drew him to one side.

"The child—" she gasped, "Rosendo Ariza's—of Simití—leave her at Badillo—they will take her over—"

"Wait, señora," interrupted the captain tenderly. "Is it not time for you to go home, too?" He laid a hand on her shoulder and looked down into her streaming eyes. "Come," he said quietly. And, leading them down the deck, he opened the door of a vacant cabin and bade them enter. "You can tell me your story when we are under way," he said, smiling as he closed the door. "*Bien,*" he muttered, his brow clouding as he strode off. "I have been looking for this for some time. But—the child—Ariza's—ah, the priest Diego! I think I see —*Caramba!* But we will not tarry long here!"

A few minutes later the big boat, her two long funnels vomiting torrents of smoke and sparks, thrust her huge wheel into the thick waters and, swinging slowly out into mid-stream, turned her flat nose toward the distant falls of Tequendama. In one of her aft cabins a woman lay on a cot, weeping hysterically. Over her bent a girl, with a face such as the masters have sought in vain. The tenderly whispered words might have been the lingering echo of those voiced in the little moonlit death-chamber of Cartagena long agone.

"Anita dear, He is with us, right here. And His arms are wide open. And He says, 'Anita, come!' "

CHAPTER 26

"BUT, Padre dear, why are you so surprised that Padre Diego did not hurt me? I would have been much more surprised if he had. You are always so astonished when evil doesn't happen—don't you ever look for good? Why, I don't ever look for anything else! How could I when I know that God is everywhere?"

[illegible]

"Yes, Father," she said, "I am sure you are right. But I do not understand. If you will, I would like you to explain it to me."

"Of course, my child," the priest replied, "I will explain it to you. But first, let us pray."

They knelt down and prayed together for a few minutes. Then the priest began to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity to Carmen Aziza.

"You see, my child," he said, "God is one God, but He is three Persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. They are all equal in power and glory. They are all eternal, and they are all one."

Carmen Aziza listened carefully to the priest's words. She was trying to understand this mystery, but it was very difficult for her. She had never heard anything like it before.

"But, Father," she said, "how can three Persons be one God? It does not make sense to me."

The priest smiled. "I know it is difficult to understand, my child," he said. "But it is a mystery that we must believe. We cannot understand everything about God, but we can trust Him and love Him."

Carmen Aziza nodded. She was beginning to understand a little bit more about the Holy Trinity. She knew that she had much to learn, but she was willing to study and pray.

"Thank you, Father," she said. "I will try to understand this mystery. I will pray to God and ask Him to help me."

The priest smiled again. "That is all you can do, my child," he said. "God will help you if you ask Him. He loves you very much."

Carmen Aziza left the church that day with a new understanding of the Holy Trinity. She knew that God was three Persons in one God, and she knew that she had much to learn about Him. But she was willing to study and pray, and she knew that God would help her.

[illegible]

"Carmen! I shall throw myself into the river!" cried the sorrowing woman, rising. "You don't know what it is—"

"Yes, I do, Anita," returned the girl quickly; "it is nothing —just zero—and you can't drown it! If it would do any good we would both jump into the river—that is, if God told us to—wouldn't we? But it doesn't help any to die, you know, for then we would have it all to do over again."

"Ana," said José, laying a hand on the woman's shoulder, "you do not understand her—neither do I, wholly. But if she tells you to go with us to Simití, why, I think I would go. I would leave it all with her. You may trust her influence with Rosendo. Come."

He took her hand and led her, weeping, but no longer resisting, down to the canoe. Carmen followed, dancing like an animated sunbeam. "What fun, oh, what fun!" she chirped, clapping her hands. "And just as soon as we get home we will go right up to the *cárcel* and let padre Rosendo out!"

"*Na, chiquita,*" said José, shaking his head mournfully; "we have no power to do that."

"Well, then, God has," returned the girl, nothing daunted.

Juan pushed the heavily laden canoe from its mooring, and set its direction toward Simití. Silence drew over the little group, and the hours dragged while the boat crept slowly along the margin of the great river. The sun had passed its meridian when the little craft turned into the *caño.* To José the change brought a most grateful relief. For, though his long residence in Simití had somewhat inured him to the intense heat of this low region, he had not yet learned to endure it with the careless indifference of the natives. Besides, his mind was filled with vivid memories of the horrors of his first river trip. And he knew that every future experience on the water would be tinged by them.

In the shaded *caño* the sunlight, sifting through the interlocking branches of ancient palms and *caobas,* mellowed and softened into a veil of yellow radiance that flecked the little stream with splashes of gold. Juan in the prow with the pole labored in silence. At times he stopped just long enough to roll a huge cigar, and to feast his bright eyes upon the fair girl whom he silently adored. Lázaro, as *patron,* sat in the stern, saturnine and unimpassioned. The woman, exhausted by the recent mental strain, dozed throughout the journey. Carmen alone seemed alive to her environment. Every foot of advance unfolded to her new delights. She sang; she chirped; she mimicked the parrots; she chattered at the excited monkeys. It was with difficulty that José could restrain her when her sharp eyes caught the glint of brilliant Passion flowers and orchids of gorgeous hue clinging to the dripping trees.

"Padre!" she exclaimed, "they are in us, you know. They are not out there at all! We see our thoughts of them—and lots of people wouldn't see anything beautiful about them at all, just because their thoughts are not beautiful. Padre, we see—what you said to me once—we see our interpretations of God's ideas, don't we? That is what I told Padre Diego. But —well, he will just *have* to see some day, won't he, Padre dear? But now let us talk in English; you know, I haven't spoken it for such a long time."

José gazed at her in rapt silence. What a rare interpretation of the mind divine was this child! But he wondered why one so pure and beautiful should attract a mind so carnal as that of Diego. And yet—

"Ah!" he mused, "it is again that law. Good always stirs up its suppositional opposite. And the most abundant good and the greatest purity stir up the most carnal elements of the human mind. All history shows it. The greater the degree of good, the greater the seeming degree of evil aroused. The perfect Christ stirred the hatred of a world. Carmen arouses Diego simply because of her purity. Yet she knows that he can not harm her."

His eyes met the girl's, and she answered his unspoken thought in the tongue which she was fast adopting. "We *have* to love him, you know, Padre dear."

"Love whom? Diego?"

"Why, yes, of course. We can't help loving him. Oh, not the 'him' that the human mind looks at, but the real 'him,' you know—the 'him' that is God's image. And you know there just isn't any other 'him,' now is there?"

"God above!" murmured José, "if I could but keep my thought as straight as she does!"

"But, Padre dear, your thought *is* straight. You know, God's thought is the only thought there really is. Any other thought has the minus sign, and so it is zero. If we will always think of the real Padre Diego, and love that, why, the unreal one will fade away from our thought."

"Do you suppose, *chiquita,* that if we love him we will make him repent?"

The child pondered the question for a moment. Then:

"Padre, what did you tell me once about the word 'repent'?"

"It comes from the Greek word *'metanoia.'* "

"Yes," she reflected; "but what did you say that—"

"Oh, yes, I told you it meant a complete and radical change of thought."

"Well!" she exclaimed, her eyes brightening.

José waited expectantly. It was heaven to have this girl

before him and to drink in the naïve expressions of her active mind.

"Padre dear, when John the baptiser said, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' did he mean to tell the people that they must have a complete change of thought?"

José laughed. And then he grew serious. "*Chiquita,*" he answered, "I have no doubt he meant just that. For you have taught me that there can be no salvation without such a complete and radical change."

"No," she said with quick emphasis; "for God is mind, you know. And His thought is the only real thought there is or can be. The thoughts of mortals are the opposites of His thoughts, and so they are illusions, and, like all lies, must pass away. If people want to be immortal, they must think as God thinks, for He is immortal. They must stop thinking that there is any power but God. They must stop letting in thoughts of sickness, of sin, of wickedness, and all those things that in English you call 'discord.' God says in the Bible, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.' Well, God is immortal and perfect. And if we want to be like Him we must think His thoughts. For our thoughts become—things. Don't you see?"

José's face clouded. "I see, *chiquita*—sometimes very clearly—and then again I don't see," he said slowly.

"You *do* see!" she insisted, getting up on her knees and facing him. "And you see as God sees! And if you hold this thought always, why, it will—it will be—"

"Externalized; is that what you are trying to say?" he suggested.

"Yes, just that. Jesus said, 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'"

"But, Carmen—I— What you say is doubtless true in essence—but I think you have not grasped it all—there are so many gaps that your simple little system of religion does not fill in—so many great questions that you do not answer. I see, in part—and then, again, I don't see at all. And when you were stolen away from Simití I saw nothing but the evil—and it nearly killed me!"

The girl studied him for a few moments. The man had always been an enigma to her. She could not understand a nature that soared into the spiritual empyrean one moment, and in the next fell floundering into the bottomless pit of materialism. The undulating curve which marked the development of the Rincón mind was to her a thing incomprehensible.

"Padre dear," she said at length, a little sadly. "When you

look at the first chapter in the Bible and read there how God made everything, and man in His image, in the image of Mind, you see, and are very happy. But when you go on to the second chapter and read how the Lord God—not God, but the *Lord* God—made a man of dirt, and how this dirt man listened to his false thoughts and fell, why, then you are unhappy. Don't you see any difference between them? Can't you see that one is a story of the real creation; and the other is the human mind's interpretation of the creation—an interpretation made according to the way the human mind thinks the creating *ought* to have been in matter? You told me this yourself. And the second chapter shows how far the human mind can go—it shows how limited it is. The human mind couldn't get any farther than that—couldn't make a man out of anything but dirt. It couldn't understand the spiritual creation. And so it made a creation of its own. It couldn't understand God; and so it made a Lord God, just like itself. Can't you see? Padre dear, can't you? And if you see, can't you *stick* to it and *live* it, until all the unreal passes away?"

José smiled into her earnest little face. "I will never cease to try, *chiquita*," he said. "But we were talking about loving Diego, weren't we? Yes, you are right, we must try to love him, for the good Jesus said we must love our enemies."

"But, if we love everybody, then we haven't any enemies. You can't love a real enemy—and so there aren't any real ones. We see in other people only what is in our own thought. If we see evil as real, why, then we will see bad men and women all around us, for we only look at our thoughts. But, if we look only at God's thoughts—Padre dear, I didn't see anything but God's thought when Padre Diego had me in his arms. I knew it wasn't real, but was just the human way of looking at things. And I knew that love was the great principle of everything, and that it just couldn't fail, any more than the principle of algebra could fail to solve my problems. Well," she concluded with a little sigh, "it didn't."

"Dear little girl, you must be patient, very patient, with your blundering old Padre José. He is groping for the light—"

In an instant, throwing the canoe into imminent danger of upsetting, the impulsive girl had hurled herself into his lap and clasped her arms about his neck. Juan and Lázaro by a quick and skillful effort kept the craft upright.

"Oh, Padre dear!" she cried, "I didn't mean to say a word that would make you unhappy—Padre dear, I love you so! Padre, look at your little girl, and tell her that you love her!"

He clasped her fiercely. "No—no!" he murmured, "I—I must not—and—yet—*chiquita*—I adore you!" He buried his face in her shoulder.

Juan made a wry mouth as he looked at the girl in the priest's arms. Then he suggested that a separation would more evenly balance the boat. Carmen laughed up at him, but slipped down into the keel and sat with her head propped against José's knees.

"Padre dear," she said, looking up at him with twinkling eyes, "I heard Lázaro say a little while before we started that he had lived many years in Simití, and that it had always been very quiet until you came."

"Ay de mi!" sighed José. "I can readily believe that the whole world was quiet until I entered it."

"But, Padre, perhaps you had to come into it to shake it up."

He laughed. *"Chiquita,"* he said, "if ever you go out into it, with your radical views regarding God and man; and if the stupid old world will give ear to you, there will be such a shaking up as it has never experienced since—"

"Padre dear," she interrupted, "I am not going out into the world. I shall stay in Simití—with you."

He looked down at her, tenderly, wistfully. And then, while her words still echoed through his mind, a great sigh escaped him.

Dusk had closed in upon them when the canoe emerged into the quiet lake. Huge vampire bats, like demons incarnate, flouted their faces as they paddled swiftly toward the distant town. Soft evening calls drifted across the placid waters from the slumbering jungle. Carmen's rich voice mingled with them; and Juan and Lázaro, catching the inspiration, broke into a weird, uncanny boating song, such as is heard only among these simple folk. As they neared the town the song of the *bogas* changed into a series of loud, yodelling halloos; and when the canoe grated upon the shaly beach, Doña Maria and a score of others were there to welcome the returned travelers.

At the sight of Ana, a murmur ran through the crowd. Doña Maria turned to the woman.

"It is Anita, madre dear," Carmen quickly announced, as she struggled out of Doña Maria's arms and took the confused Ana by the hand.

The light of recognition came into Doña Maria's eyes. Quietly, and without demonstration, she went to the shrinking woman and, taking the tear-stained face in her hands, impressed a kiss upon each cheek. *"Bien,"* she said in a low, tender voice, "we have waited long for you, daughter. And now let us go home."

* * * * * *

The glow of dawn had scarce begun to creep timidly across

the arch of heaven when Fernando knocked at the portal of Rosendo's house and demanded the custody of Carmen. José was already abroad.

"And now, Fernando," demanded the priest, "what new outrage is this?"

The constable flushed with embarrassment. *"Na,* Padre, a thousand pardons—but it is the order of the Alcalde, and I only obey. But—you may knock me down," he added eagerly, "and then I can return to him and say that I could not take the girl, even by force!" The honest fellow, ashamed of his mission, hung his head. José seized his hand.

"Fernando!" he cried, "what say the people of Simití?"

"They are with you, Padre. They would demand Rosendo's release, if there were proof that the girl—"

"Good, then! we have the proof," broke in José. "Rosendo knows of our return?"

"Yes, the guard informed him this morning. The Alcalde, you know, permits no one to approach the prisoner."

"And does he know that Ana is here?"

"The guard did not tell him, for fear of exciting the old man. *Hombre!* I think there is no one in town who would venture to tell Rosendo that."

"Bien pues, Fernando, I think the time has come! Go quietly back and summon every one to a meeting in the town hall at once. Tell them—"

"Bien, Padre, I shall know what to tell them. But," anxiously, "Don Mario has the power to—"

"And we have a greater power," quickly replied the priest, his thought dwelling on Carmen.

An hour later the town hall was a babel of clacking tongues. Men, women and children hurried, chattering, to and fro, exchanging diverse views and speculating eagerly on the probable outcome of the meeting. José stood before them, with Carmen's hand clasped tightly in his. Don Mario, purple and trembling with rage, was perched upon a chair, vainly trying to get the ear of the people.

In the midst of the hubbub a hush fell suddenly over the concourse. All heads turned, and all eyes fastened upon Ana, as she entered the room and moved timidly toward José. The people fell back to make a passage for her. Her shoulders were bent, and her face was covered with a black *mantilla.*

Don Mario, as his glance fell upon her, again attempted to address the multitude. A dozen voices bade him cease. A strong arm from behind pushed him from the chair. His craven heart began to quake, and he cast anxious glances toward the single exit.

Gently removing the *mantilla* from the face of the woman, José turned her toward the people. "Friends!" he said in a loud, penetrating voice, "behold the work of Diego!"

He paused for the effect which he knew would be made upon this impressionable people. Then, when the loud murmur had passed, he drew Carmen out before him and, pointing to her, said dramatically, "And shall we also throw this innocent child to the wolf?"

The assembly broke into a roar. Fists were shaken under the Alcalde's nose, and imprecations were hurled at him from all sides. Don Mario drew his soiled handkerchief and mopped his steaming brow. Then his voice broke out in a shriek: "The soldiers—this day I shall summon them—it is a riot!"

"*Caramba!* He speaks truth!" cried a voice from the crowd. The babel commenced anew.

"The soldiers! *Caramba!* Let Diego have his child!"

"*Maldita!*"

"Who says it is not his?"

"I do!"

It was Ana. Clasping José's arm to steady herself, she had turned to confront the excited assembly.

Silence descended upon them all. José held up his hand. A sob escaped the woman. Then:

"The priest Diego had a child—a girl. Her name—it was—Carmen. The child is—dead."

"*Caramba!* girl, how know you that?" shrilled a woman's excited voice.

"I know, because I—was—its—mother!"

Pandemonium burst upon the room at the woman's words. Don Mario started for the door, but found his way blocked. "Diego had other children!" he shouted; "and this girl is one of them!"

"It is false!" cried Ana in a loud voice. "I have lived with him eight years! I know from his own lips that I speak the truth! See what he has done to me! Would I lie?"

"To the *cárcel!* Release Rosendo!"

"We will write to the President at Bogotá! Don Mario must be removed!"

"*Caramba!* Such an Alcalde!"

"Let him send for the soldiers, if he wishes to die!"

"To the *cárcel!*"

As a unit the fickle people streamed from the room and started for the jail. Don Mario was borne along on the heaving tide. José and Carmen followed; but Ana fell back and returned to the house of Rosendo.

The guard at the jail, seeing the concourse approaching,

threw down his *machete* and fled. Rosendo's eyes were big with speculation, though his heart beat apprehensively. The people jammed into the small hut until it swayed and threatened to collapse.

"The key to the lock—*Caramba!* the guard has it!"

"Catch him!"

"No! bring a *barra!*"

Juan quickly produced a long iron bar, and with a few lusty efforts sprung the stocks. A dozen hands lifted the cramped Rosendo out and stood him upon his feet. Carmen squirmed through the crowd and threw herself into his arms.

Then, with shouts and gesticulations, a triumphal procession quickly formed, and the bewildered and limping Rosendo was escorted down the main street of the town and across the *plaza* to his home. At the door of the house José turned and, holding up a hand, bade the people quietly disperse and leave the liberated man to enjoy undisturbed the sacred reunion with his family. With a parting shout, the people melted quickly away, and quiet soon reigned again over the ancient town.

"*Bien,* Padre," said Rosendo, pausing before his door to clasp anew the priest's hand, "you have not told me what has caused this. Was it the little Carmen—"

He stopped short. Glancing in at the door, his eyes had fallen upon Ana. To José, hours seemed suddenly compressed into that tense moment.

Slowly Rosendo entered the house and advanced to the shrinking woman. Terror spread over her face, and she clutched her throat as the big man stalked toward her. Then, like a flash, Carmen darted in front of her and faced Rosendo.

"It is Anita, padre dear," she said, looking up into his set face, and clasping his hand in both of hers. "She has come home again. Aren't we glad!"

Rosendo seemed not to see the child. His voice came cold and harsh. "*Bien,* outcast, is your lover with you, that I may strangle him, too?" He choked and swallowed hard.

"Padre!" cried Carmen, putting both her hands against him. "See! Those bad thoughts nearly strangled you! Don't let them get in! Don't!"

"*Bien,* girl!" snarled the angry man, still addressing the cowering woman. "Did you tire of him, that you now sneak home? Or—*Caramba!*" as Ana rose and stood before him, "you come here that your illegal brat may be born! Not under my roof! *Santa Maria!* Never! Take it back to him! Take it back, I say!" he shouted, raising his clenched fist as if to strike her.

Carmen turned swiftly and threw herself upon the woman. Looking over her shoulder, she addressed the raging man:

"Padre Rosendo! this is not your house! It is God's! He only lets you have it, because He is good to you! Shame on you, for daring to drive Anita away—your own little girl!" Her voice rose shrill, and her words cut deep into the old man's embittered heart.

"Shame on you, padre Rosendo!" quickly flowed the scorching words. "If God were like you He would drive you from the house, too! Are you so much better than the good Jesus that you can drive away a woman who sins? Shame on you, padre! Are you better than the good father who was so glad to see his prodigal son? If God were to punish you for your sins, would He even let you live? Did He not set you free this very morning? And do you now thank Him by driving your little girl from her own home? Do you know that it was Anita who made you free, and who brought me here? God used her to do that. And is this the way you thank Him? Then you will lose us both, for we will not stay with you!"

José stepped up and took Rosendo's arm. Carmen turned about and continued her scoriation:

"Padre Rosendo, if the good, pure God was willing to use Anita to save me from Padre Diego and bring me back to you, are you so wicked and so ungrateful that you throw His love back in His face? Shame on you, padre! Shame! Shame!"

"Caramba!" cried Rosendo, tears bursting from his eyes. "She has fouled my name—it was a good name, though my parents were slaves—it was a good name—and she blackened it—she—"

"Padre Rosendo, there are only two names that have never been blackened! Your human name is nothing—it is zero—it counts for foolishness with God! You yourself are making your name blacker now than Anita ever did! She repents, and comes to her father; and he is so much more wicked than she that he drives her out!—"

"Enough, Carmen, child!" interrupted José. "Come, Rosendo; go into the parish house! Carmen, go with him!"

Carmen hesitated. Then a smile lighted up her face, and she reached up and took Rosendo's hand. Together they passed silently out and into the priest's house.

Ana sank to the floor, where she buried her face in her hands and wept violently.

"Wait, Ana," said José, tenderly stroking the unhappy woman's hair. "Wait. They will soon return. And you shall remain here, where you belong."

A half hour passed. Then José, wondering, went quietly to the door of his house and looked in. Rosendo sat at the table, with Carmen on his knees.

"And, padre," the child was saying, "the good Jesus told the woman not to sin any more; and she went away happy. Padre, God has told Anita not to sin any more—and she has come to us to be happy. We are going to make her so, aren't we? Padre Diego couldn't hurt me, you know, for God wouldn't let him. And he hasn't hurt Anita—God wouldn't let him keep her—wouldn't let her stay with him. Don't you see, padre? And we have got to be like Him—we *are* like Him, really. But now we have got to show it, to prove it, you know."

Rosendo's head was bent over the girl. Neither of them saw José. The child went on with increased animation:

"And, padre dear, God sends us Anita's little baby for us to love and protect. Oh, padre, if the little one is a boy, can't we call it José?"

"Yes, *chiquita*," José heard the old man murmur brokenly.

"And—padre, if it is a girl—what shall we call it?"

The man's arm tightened about her. "We—we will call it —Carmencita," he whispered.

The girl clapped her hands. "Can't you see, padre, that God sends us Anita's baby so that Padre Diego shall not have it? And now let's go and tell her so, right away!" she cried, jumping down.

José slipped quickly back and stood beside the woman when Carmen and Rosendo entered the room. The old man went directly to his daughter, and, taking her in his brawny arms, raised her from the floor and strained her to his breast. Tears streamed down his swart cheeks, and the words he would utter choked and hung in his throat.

"Padre," whispered the delighted child, "shall I tell her our names for the baby?"

José turned and stole softly from the room. Divine Love was there, and its dazzling effulgence blinded him. In the quiet of his own chamber he sought to understand the marvelous goodness of God to them that serve Him.

CHAPTER 27

THE reversal of a life-current is not always effected suddenly, nor amid the din of stirring events, nor yet in an environment that we ourselves might choose as an appropriate setting. It comes in the fullness of time, and amid such scenes as the human mind which undergoes the transformation may see externalized within its own consciousness by the working of the as yet dimly perceived laws of thought.

Perhaps some one, skilled in the discernment of mental laws and their subtle, irresistible working, might have predicted the fate which overtook the man José, the fulsome details of which are herein being recounted. Perhaps such a one might say in retrospect that the culmination of years of wrong thinking, of false beliefs closely cherished, of attachment to fear, to doubt, and to wrong concepts of God, had been externalized at length in eddying the man upon this far verge of civilization, still clinging feebly to the tattered fragments of a blasted life. But it would have been a skilled prognostician, indeed, who could have foreseen the renewal of this wasted life in that of the young girl, to whom during the past four years José de Rincón had been transferring his own unrealized hopes and his vast learning, but without the dross of inherited or attached beliefs, and without taint of his native vacillation and indecision of mind.

For what he had been striving to fit her, he knew not. But in a vaguely outlined way he knew that he was being used as a tool to shape in some degree the mental development of this strange girl. Nor, indeed, as the years passed, did she continue to seem so strange to him. On the contrary, he now thought it more marvelous by far that the world, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, did not think and act more as did this girl, whose religious instruction he knew to have been garnered at the invisible hand of God. That she must some day leave him, despite her present earnest protestations, he felt to be inevitable. And the thought pierced his soul like a lance. But he could not be certain that with maturity she would wish to remain always in the primitive environment in which she had been nurtured. Nor could he, even if she were willing, immolate her upon the barb of his own selfishness.

As for himself, the years had but seemed to increase the conviction that he could never leave the Church, despite his anomalous position and despite his renewed life—unless, indeed, she herself cast him forth. Each tenderly hopeful letter from his proud, doting mother only added to this conviction by emphasizing the obstacles opposing such a course. Her declining years were now spent among the mental pictures which she hourly drew upon the canvas of her imagination, pictures in which her beloved son, chastened and purified, had at length come into the preferment which had always awaited loyal scions of the house of Rincón. Hourly she saw the day draw nearer when he should be restored to her yearning arms. Each dawn threw its first rays upon his portrait, which hung where her waking eyes might open upon it. Each night the shadow cast by the candle which always burned beneath it

seemed to her eager sight to crown that fair head with a bishop's mitre—a cardinal's hat—aye, at times she even saw the triple crown of the Vicar of Christ resting upon those raven locks. José knew this. If her own pen did not always correctly delineate her towering hopes, his astute uncle did not fail to fill in whatever hiatus remained. And the pressure of filial devotion and pride of race at times completely smothered within him the voice of Truth which Carmen continually sounded, and made him resolve often that on the day when she should leave him he would bury his head in the lap of Mother Church and submit without further resistance to the sable veil of assumed authority which he knew she would draw across his mind. Convincing as were the proofs which had come to him of the existence of a great demonstrable principle which the Christ had sought to make a dull world recognize, nevertheless he had as yet failed to rise permanently above the mesmerism of human belief, which whispered into his straining ears that he must not strive to progress beyond his understanding, lest, in the attempt to gain too rapidly, he lose all. To sink into the arms of Mother Church and await the orderly revelation of Truth were less dangerous now than a precipitate severance of all ties and a launching forth into strange seas with an untried compass.

The arguments to which he listened were insidious. True, they reasoned, he had seemed to see the working of mental law in his own restoration to health when he had first come to Simití. He had seemed to see Rosendo likewise restored. But these instances, after all, might have been casual. That Carmen had had aught to do with them, no one could positively affirm. True, he had seen her protected in certain unmistakable ways. But—others were likewise protected, even where there had been no thought of an immanent, sheltering God. True, the incident of the epidemic in Simití two years before had impressed upon him the serious consequences of fear, and the blighting results of false belief. He had profited by that lesson. But he could not hope suddenly to empty his mentality of its content of human thought; nor did wisdom advise the attempt. He had at first tried to rise too rapidly. His frequent backsliding frightened and warned him.

Thus, while the days sped by, did the priest's thought ebb and flow. As morn broke, and the gallant sun drove the cowardly shadows of night across the hills, his own courage rose, and he saw in Carmen the pure reflection of the Mind which was in Christ Jesus. As night fell, and darkness slunk back again and held the field, so returned the legion of fears and doubts that battled for his soul. Back and forth in the arena

of his consciousness strove the combatants, while he rushed irresolutely to and fro, now bearing the banner of the powers of light, now waving aloft, though with sinking heart, the black flag of the carnal host. For a while after his arrival in Simití he had seemed to rise rapidly into the consciousness of good as all-in-all. But the strain which had been constantly upon him had prevented the full recognition of all that Carmen saw, and each rise was followed by a fall that left him for long periods immersed in despair.

Following the return of Carmen and the ripple of excitement which her abduction had spread over the wonted calm of Simití, the old town settled back again into its accustomed lethargy, and José and the girl resumed their interrupted work. From Ana it was learned that Diego had not voiced the command of Wenceslas in demanding the girl; and when this became known the people rose in a body to her support. Don Mario, though he threatened loudly, knew in his heart he was beaten. He knew, likewise, that any further hostile move on his part would result in a demand by the people for his removal from office. He therefore retired sulking to the seclusion of his *patio*, where he sat down patiently to await the turn of events.

Rosendo, his great heart softened toward his erring daughter, again rejoiced in the reunion of his broken family circle. But his soul burned within him as, day after day, he saw Ana move silently about like a sorrow incarnate. At times, when perchance he would come upon her huddled in a corner and weeping quietly, he would turn away, cursing deeply and swearing fulsome vengeance upon the lecherous beast who had wrought her ruin.

"Padre," he one day said to José, "I shall kill him—I know it. The girl's suffering is breaking my heart. He is like an evil cloud hanging always over my family. I hate him! I hate him, as the devil hates the light! And I shall kill him. Be prepared." And José offered no remonstrance, for the case lay not in his hands.

Carmen again entered upon her interrupted studies with ardent enthusiasm. And her first demand was that she be allowed to plunge into a searching study of the Bible. "Padre," she exclaimed, "it is a wonderful book! Why—do the people in the world know what a book this is? For if they did, they would never be sick or unhappy again!"

He knew not how to answer her. And there was no need that he should.

"Padre!" Her eyes were aflame with holy light. "See! Here it is—the whole thing! 'Let the wicked forsake his way,

and the unrighteous man his *thoughts.*' But—don't the people know what that means?"

"Well, *chiquita,* and what does it mean?" he asked indulgently.

"Why—the unrighteous man is the man who thinks wrong thoughts—thoughts of power opposed to God—thoughts of sin, of sickness, of accidents, and all sorts of evil things—beliefs that these things are real, and that God made or caused them!"

"*Bien,* and you think the Bible speaks truth?"

"Padre! how can you ask that? Why, it says right here that it is given by inspiration! That means that the men or women who wrote it thought God's thoughts!"

"That He wrote it, you mean?"

"No, but that those who wrote it were—well, were cleaner window-panes than other people—that they were so clean that the light shone through them better than it did through others."

"And what do you think now about Jesus?" he inquired.

"Why, as you once said, that he was the very cleanest window-pane of all!" she quickly replied.

From that hour the Bible was the girl's constant companion. Daily she pored over it, delighted, enraptured. José marveled at her immediate spiritual grasp. Instead of the world's manner of looking upon it as only a collection of beautiful promises and admonitions, she saw within it the statement of a principle that offered itself as a mighty tool with which to work out humanity's every-day problems here and now. From the first she began to make out little lists of collated scriptural verses, so arranging them that she could read in them a complete expression of an idea of God. These she would bring to José and, perching herself upon his lap, would expound them, to her own great delight and the wonder of the man who listened.

"See, Padre," she said, holding up one of these lists, "it says that 'in that day' whatever we ask of him will be given to us. Well, 'that day' means when we have washed our window-panes clean, and the light shines through so clear that we can ask in His name. It means when we have stopped saying that two and two are seven."

"Which means," José interpolated, "asking in his character."

"Yes," she replied, "for then we will be just like him. And then whatever we ask 'believing' will be given to us, for 'believing' will then be 'understanding,' will it not? When we know—really *know*—that we have things, why—why, we have them, that's all!"

She did not wait for his reply, but went on enthusiastically:

"You know, Padre, in order to be like him we have got to 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness'—His right-thinking. Well, Jesus said the kingdom of God was within us. Of course it is, for it is all a question of right-thinking. When we think right, then our right thoughts will be—what you said—"

"Externalized," he supplied.

"Yes. We will see them all around us, instead of seeing, as we do now, a lot of jumbled-up thoughts of good and evil which we call people and things. They will all be good then. And then will be the time when 'God shall wipe away all tears.' It is, as you say in English, 'up to us' to bring this about. It is not for God to do it at all. Don't you see that He has already done His part? He has made everything, and 'behold it was very good.' Well, He doesn't have to do it all over again, does He? No. But we have got to wash our windows clean and let in the light that comes from Him. That light comes from Him all the time, just as the beams come from the sun, without ever stopping. We never have to ask the sun to shine, do we? And neither do we have to ask God to be good to us, nor tell Him what we think He ought to do for us. We only have to *know* that He is good, to us and to everything, all the time."

"Yes, *chiquita,* we must be truly baptised."

"That is what it means to be baptised, Padre—just washing our window-panes so clean that the light will come in."

"And that light, little one, is truth. It certainly is a new way of looking at it, at least, *chiquita."*

"But, Padre, it is the *only* way," she persisted.

"Bien, I would not say that you were mistaken, Carmen."

"No, Padre, for we can prove it. And, look here," she continued, referring to her list. "If the kingdom of heaven is within us, then everything that comes to us in life comes from within, and not from without. And so, things never happen, do they? Don't you see?"

"I see," he replied seriously, "that from the mouths of babes and sucklings comes infinite wisdom."

"Well, Padre dear, wisdom is God's light, and it comes through any one who is clean. It doesn't make any difference how old or young that person is. Years mean nothing but—but zero."

"How can you say that, *chiquita?"*

"Why, Padre, is God old?"

"No. He is always the same."

"And we are really like Him?"

"The real 'we'—yes."

"Well, the unreal 'we' is already zero. Didn't you yourself say that the human, mortal man was a product of false thought, thought that was the opposite of God's thought, and so no thought at all? Didn't you say that such thought was illusion —the lie about God and what He has made? Then isn't the human 'we' zero?"

"Well—but—*chiquita,* it is often hard for me to see anything but this sort of 'we,' " returned the man dejectedly.

"Oh, Padre!" she entreated, "why will you not try to look at something else than the human man? Look at God's man, the image of infinite mind. You have *got* to do it, you know, some time. Jesus said so. He said that every man would have to overcome. That means turning away from the thoughts that are externalized as sin and sickness and evil, and looking only at God's thoughts—and, what is more, *sticking to them!*"

"Yes," dubiously, "I suppose we must some time overcome every belief in anything opposed to God."

"Well, but need that make you unhappy? It is just because you still cling to the belief that there is other power than God that you get so discouraged and mixed up. Can't you let go? Try it! Why, I would try it even if a whole mountain fell on me!"

And José could but clasp the earnest girl in his arms and vow that he would try again as never before.

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Meantime, while José and his little student-teacher were delving into the inexhaustible treasury of the Word; while the peaceful days came into their lives and went out again almost unperceived, the priest Diego left the bed upon which he had been stretched for many weeks, and hobbled painfully about upon his scarcely mended ankle. While a prisoner upon his couch his days had been filled with torture. Try as he might, he could not beat down the vision which constantly rose before him, that of the beautiful girl who had been all but his. He cursed; he raved; he vowed the foulest vengeance. And then he cried piteously, as he lay chained to his bed—cried for something that seemed to take human shape in her. He protested that he loved her; that he adored her; that without her he was but a blasted cedar. His nurses fled his bedside. His physician stopped his ears. Only Don Antonio was found low enough in thought to withstand the flow of foul language which issued from the baffled Diego's thick lips while he moved about in attendance upon the unhappy priest's needs.

Then came from the acting-Bishop, Wenceslas, a mandate commissioning Diego upon a religio-political mission to the

interior city of Medellín. The now recovered priest smiled grimly when he read it. Then he summoned Ricardo.

"Prepare yourself, *amigo,*" he said, "for a work of the Lord. I go into the interior. You accompany me as far as Badillo, where we disembark for stinking Simití. And, *amigo,* do you secure a trustworthy companion. The work may be heavy. Meantime, my blessing and absolution."

Then he sat down and despatched a long letter to Don Mario.

CHAPTER 28

"ROSENDO," said José one morning shortly thereafter, as the old man entered the parish house for a little chat, "a Decree has been issued recently by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office whereby, instead of the cloth scapulary which you are wearing, a medal may be substituted. I have received several from Cartagena. Will you exchange yours?"

"*Cierto,* Padre—but," he hesitated, "is the new one just as—"

"To be sure, *amigo.* It carries the same indulgences. See," exhibiting the medal. "The Sacred Heart and the blessed Virgin. But I have arranged it to wear about the neck."

Rosendo knelt reverently and crossed himself while José hung the new scapulary over his head. The old man beamed his joy. "*Caramba!*" he exclaimed, rising, "but I believe this one will keep off more devils than that old cloth thing you made for me!"

"Why, Rosendo!" admonished José, repressing a smile, "did I not bless that one before the altar?"

"*Cierto,* Padre, and I beg a thousand pardons. It was the blessing, wasn't it? Not the cloth. But this one," regarding it reverently, "this one—"

"Oh, yes, this one," put in José, "carries the blessing of His Grace, acting-Bishop Wenceslas."

"And a Bishop is always very holy, is he not, Padre?" queried Rosendo. "It makes no difference who he is, for the office makes him holy, is it not so, Padre?"

"Oh, without doubt," returned José, his thought reverting to the little Maria and the babe which for four years he had been supporting in distant Cartagena.

"*Na,* Padre," remonstrated Rosendo, catching the insinuation, "we must not speak ill of the Bishop, lest he be a Saint tomorrow! But, Padre," he went on, changing the topic, "I

came to tell you that Don Luis has given me a contract to cut wood for him on the island. A quantity, too. *Hombre!* I shall earn much money by its terms. I set out to-morrow morning before daybreak."

José reflected. The man's words aroused within him a faint suspicion. Don Luis and the Alcalde were boon companions. José wondered if in this commission he could see the gloved hand of Don Mario. But he gave no hint of his thought to Rosendo.

The next morning, long before sun-up, a mist lay thick over the valley, so thick that Rosendo, as he made his way down to the lake, scarce could distinguish the road ahead of him. The dry season had passed, and the rains were now setting in. As he hurried along, the old man mused dubiously on the contract which Don Luis had made with him. To cut wood in the rainy season!—but, after all, that was no concern of his. And yet—why had Padre José grown suddenly quiet when he learned of the contract yesterday? His bare feet fell softly upon the shales, and he proceeded more cautiously as he neared the water's edge.

"*Hombre!*" he muttered, striving to penetrate the mist; "only a *loco* ventures out on the lake in such weather!"

He reached the boat, and placed in it the rope and axe which he had brought. Then, still troubled in thought, he sat down on the edge of the canoe and dropped into a puzzled meditation.

Suddenly through the fog he heard a sound. Somebody was approaching. A fisherman, perhaps. But fishermen do not go out on the lake in dense fogs, he remembered. The tread sounded nearer. He waited, speculating. Then through the mist loomed the thick body of a man. Straining his eyes, Rosendo recognized Padre Diego.

With a bound the old man was upon his feet. His thick arm shot out like a catapult; and his great fist, meeting Diego squarely upon the temple, felled him like an ox.

For a moment Rosendo stood over the prostrate priest, like a lion above its prey. Then he reached into the canoe and drew out the axe. Holding it aloft, he stood an instant poised above the senseless man; then with a mighty swing he whirled about and hurled it far out into the lake. He seemed suddenly bereft of his senses. Incoherent muttering issued from his trembling lips. He looked about in bewilderment. A thought seemed to impress him. He took the rope from the boat and quickly bound Diego hand and foot. This done, he picked up the unconscious priest and tossed him into the canoe as if he had been a billet of wood. Jumping in after him, he hastily pushed

off from the shore and paddled vigorously in the direction of the island. Why he was doing this he had not the faintest idea.

It was all the work of a few seconds; yet when his reason came again Rosendo found himself far out in the thick fog, and his prisoner moaning softly as consciousness slowly returned. The sense of direction which these sons of the jungle possess is almost infallible, and despite the watery cloud which enveloped him, the old man held his course undeviatingly toward the distant isle, into the low, muddy shore of which his boat at length forced its way under the impulse of his great arms.

The island, a low patch a few acres in extent, lay far out in the lake like a splotch of green paint on a plate of glass. Its densely wooded surface, rising soft and oozy only a few feet above the water, was destitute of human habitation, but afforded a paradise for swarms of crawling and flying creatures, which now scattered in alarm at the approach of these early visitors coming so unexpectedly out of the heavy fog.

When the canoe grounded, Rosendo sprang out and pulled it well up into the mud. Then he lifted the priest out and staggered into the thick brush, where he threw his burden heavily upon the ground. Leaving his prisoner for a moment, he seized his *machete* and began to cut back into the brush. A grunt of satisfaction came from his lips. Returning to the now conscious Diego, he grasped the rope which bound him and dragged him along the newly opened trail into a little clearing which lay beyond. There he propped him up against a huge cedar. As he did this, Diego's mouth opened wide and a piercing scream issued. "Ricardo—help!" he called.

The cry echoed dismally across the desolate island. In an instant Rosendo was upon him, with his knife clutched in his fist. "Repeat that, *cayman,*" he cried furiously, "and this finds your wicked heart!"

The craven Diego shook with fear; but he fell silent before the threat of the desperate man into whose hands he had so unwittingly fallen.

Rosendo stepped back and stood before his captive, regarding him uncertainly. Diego's quick intuition did not fail to read the old man's perplexity; and his own hope revived accordingly. It was a pretty trick, this of Rosendo's—but, after all, he would not dare too much. Diego gradually became easier in mind. He even smiled unctuously at his captor.

"*Bien, amigo,*" he said at length, "is this your customary reception to visitors in your village? *Caramba!* but what will the good Bishop say when he learns that you have thus mistreated his trusted agent?"

Rosendo stood before him like a statue. His thought was confused, and it moved slowly. In the cries of the disturbed birds he seemed now to hear the warning voice of Carmen. In the watery vapor that rolled over him he seemed to feel the touch of her soft, restraining hand.

"*Bien, compadre,*" purred Diego, "would it not be well for you to loosen this bit of thread, that we may make our way back to the village? *Caramba!* but it cuts sore—and I am soft, my friend, for I have been ill."

Rosendo's wrath flared up anew. "What made you ill, *cayman?*" he shouted, drawing nearer to the shrinking Diego and shaking a great fist in his face. "What made you ill, buzzard? *Caramba!* I would that your illness had carried you off and saved me the task of sending you down to purgatory!"

Diego became thoroughly alarmed again. "But—Rosendo—*caro amigo,* let us reason together! Ah, *compadre*—loosen but a little this rope which cuts into my tender skin as your bitter words do into my soul!"

"*Na,* vulture, but you will drown more quickly thus!" retorted Rosendo, his huge frame trembling with agitation.

Diego's heart stopped. Then he sought to collect himself. He was in a desperate plight. But the man before him was an ignorant *peon.* It was not the first time that he had set his own wit against another's brute strength. The ever-present memory of the girl became more vivid. It glowed before him. What was it she had said? "You see only your thoughts of me—and they are very bad!" Was he seeing now only his own bad thoughts? But she had said they were unreal. And this episode—*Hombre!* he would not be afraid. His thought was vastly more powerful than that of a simple *peon!* He smiled again at his fear.

"But, *amigo,*" he resumed gently, "if you had wished to drown me, why did you bring me here? But—ah, well, I have long been prepared to go. I have been sadly misunderstood—disbelieved—persecuted! Ah, friend Rosendo, if you could know what I do—but—*Bien,* it is of no consequence now. Come, then, good fellow, despatch me quickly! I have made my peace with God." Diego ceased talking and began to murmur prayers.

Rosendo stared at him in amazement. The wind was being taken from his sails. Diego noted the effect, and resumed his speech. His voice was low and soft, and at times great tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Rosendo, friend, I wish to go. I weary of life. There is no stain upon my soul. And yet, I grieve that you must tarnish yours with my blood. But," his eyes brightening and his

tone becoming more animated, "Rosendo, I will pray the blessed Virgin for you. When I am with her in paradise I will ask her to beg the gentle Saviour to forgive you. *Bien,* good friend, we shall all be together in heaven some day." He started his orisons again, and soon was praying like a locomotive: *"Ora pro nobis! Santa Maria, ora pro nobis!"*

He stopped and sighed gently. Rosendo stood stupidly before him.

"Rosendo—I must say this before I die—I came to Simití to see you. I was approaching the boat to hold converse with you. But, you struck me—there, *qué importa!* And yet—it was about the gentle Ana, your beautiful daughter— But, wait, Rosendo—God above! hear me through—"

Rosendo had started again toward him.

"Good friend, hear me first, then kill me quickly, for I much desire to go to my home above!" Diego spoke rapidly. The impression must be made upon Rosendo at once, or all was lost. The wily priest knew the *peon* mind.

"Bien, good friend, you have misunderstood me. But I forgive you. I—Rosendo—I—you will keep my secret, will you not? *Bien,* I have left the Church. I am no longer a priest. It was for good reasons that God took me from the priesthood for other work in His field. *Bien,* the bonds of celibacy removed, behold! my first thought is for my beautiful Ana. I came to ask you for her hand. I would render legitimate her unborn child. I would return to her the peace which she lost when we became so deeply enamored of each other. Rosendo, I have come to Simití to lay my life before you—to yield it to the mother of my child—to offer it in future service as a recompense for the unhappiness which, the Virgin knows, I did not willingly bring upon her, or you!"

Rosendo's head was now in a whirl. His eyes protruded, and his mouth was agape. "But—the little Carmen—" he muttered.

"Alas! friend," said Diego sadly, shaking his head, while he quickly grasped the cue, "I have ceased my endeavors to make you believe that she is my child. *Caramba!* I can only leave it to the blessed Virgin to restore her to me when we have both passed the portals of death."

"You still claim to be her father? You—!"

"Caro amigo," returned Diego gently, "in these last moments I see in her the beautiful image of her blessed mother, who was taken from me long before I met and loved your Ana. But I despair of enforcing my claim. I await now the reunion which death alone can effect. And so, friend, be quick! But do not make me suffer. Drown me not, I pray you, but rather open

an artery and let me fall gently asleep here beneath this noble tree."

A light came into Rosendo's troubled eyes. A cunning smile lurked about his mouth.

"*Bien pues*, it shall be as you wish, vulture," he replied in a tone which again struck terror to Diego's heart. He drew his knife and approached the horrified priest.

"*Caramba!*" shrieked Diego, shrinking back against the tree. "*Hombre!* you do not intend—"

"Why not, vampire?" returned Rosendo, the sardonic smile spreading across his grim features. "Did you not ask it?"

"But—*Hombre!* Back!—*Caramba!* Back!—Rosendo—God above! But would you go down to hell with murder on your soul?"

"*Cierto*, carrion! I kill the body. But you go down with a load of murdered souls!"

"Rosendo—God!—it means hell for eternity to you!"

"To be sure, dog-meat," calmly replied Rosendo. "But hell will be heaven to me as I sit forever and hourly remind you of the suffering Ana and the beautiful Carmen, whom you tried to ruin! Is it not so?"

"Ah, God!" Diego saw that he had lost. Wild thoughts flashed through his mind with lightning speed. Desperation lent them wings. A last expedient came to him. He fixed his beady eyes upon Rosendo and muttered: "Coward! coward! you bind a sick man and stick him like a pig!"

Rosendo hesitated. Diego quickly followed up his slight advantage.

"We give a deer, a tapir, a jaguar, a chance for its life. We fear them not. But you—coward, you are afraid of a sick man! And a priest!"

Rosendo could bear the taunt no longer. "*Caramba!*" he cried, "what would you?" He leaped to the sitting man and at a stroke severed his bonds. Diego got slowly to his feet.

"*Bien*, spew of the vampire! you have now a chance!"

Diego extended his empty hands, palms up. He smiled significantly. Rosendo caught the insinuation.

"*Caramba!* take the knife! *Hombre!* but I will kill you with my bare hands!" He threw the long knife to Diego, who stooped and picked it up.

Stepping quickly back, holding the weapon firmly clenched before him, the priest slowly circled Rosendo, as if looking for an opening. An evil smile played constantly over his heavy face, and his little eyes glittered like diamonds. Rosendo stood like a rock, his long arms hanging at his side.

Then, with a shrill, taunting laugh, Diego turned suddenly

and plunged into the newly-cut trail toward the lake. In an instant he was lost in the fog.

For a moment Rosendo stood dumb with amazement. Then he sprang after the priest. But it was too late. Diego had reached the canoe, leaped quickly in, and pushed off. Rosendo saw the mist swallow him. He was left a prisoner, without a boat, and with two miles of shrouded water stretching between him and the town!

A low moan burst from him. He had been tricked, outwitted; and the evil genius which for years had menaced his happiness was heading straight toward the town, where his accomplice, Ricardo, awaited. What would they do, now that he was out of the way? The thought seared his brain. Great beads of water, distilled from his agony, burst through his pores. The Juncal river lay off to the west, and at a much less distance than Simití. He might swim to it and secure a canoe at the village. But—the lake was alive with crocodiles!

Chagrin and apprehension overwhelmed him, and he burst into a flood of bitter tears. He threw himself upon the ground, and tossed and moaned in despair. The fog thickened. A twilight darkness settled over the waters. Nature—God himself—seemed to conspire with Diego.

Rosendo suddenly rose to his feet. He drew the new medal scapulary around in front of him and kissed it, reverently crossing himself. *"Santa Virgen,"* he prayed, "help me—it is for the child!" Then, taking between his teeth the knife which Diego had dropped, he rushed into the water and struck out for the distant village of Juncal.

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Late that afternoon, while the tropical rain was descending in torrents, Rosendo staggered into the parish house, where Carmen and José were absorbed in their work. "Padre!" he gasped, *"Loado sea Dios!"* as his eyes fell upon the girl. Then he sank to the floor in utter exhaustion.

"Rosendo! what is it?" cried José, bending over him in apprehension, while Carmen stood lost in wonder.

"Padre Diego—!" cried Rosendo, raising himself up on his elbow. "Has he been here?"

"Padre Diego!" cried both José and the girl in astonishment. Instinctively José's arm went about the child. Rosendo dragged himself to a chair and sank limply into it.

"Then, Padre, he will come. He is in Simití. He is no longer a priest!"

Slowly the story came out, bit by bit. José listened in horror. Carmen's face was deeply serious.

"Bien, Padre," said Rosendo, concluding his dramatic and

disconnected recital, "I plowed through the water—*Caramba!* I knew not at what moment I should feel the jaws of a *cayman* seize upon me! But the Virgin had heard my prayer. I must offer a candle this night. But I did not land at Juncal. It was some half league farther west. *Bien,* I was then glad, for had I appeared in the village, all would have said that I had murdered Diego! And so I struck out along the trail that skirts the lake, and followed it around until I came here. *Caramba!* but see how my feet are cut! And the rain—*Hombre!* it beat me down—I fell again and again! And then, the fear that I was too late—*Ah, Dios!* But she is safe—*Caramba!* the Virgin be praised!"

"But, Rosendo," said José anxiously, "where can Diego—"

"He is here, *Caramba!* in Simití! *Hombre!* but I shall set out at once and search every house! And he shall do well if he escape this time!"

But dusk was falling; and the old man, his strength sapped, listened not unwillingly to José's better counsel. With the coming of night the rain ceased, and the clouds rolled up and slipped down behind the mountains, leaving the moon riding in splendor across the infinite blue. Then José, leaving Carmen with Rosendo, walked to and fro through the streets of the old town, listening and watching. He wandered down to the lake. He climbed the hill where stood the second church. He thought he caught the gleam of a light within the old edifice. He crept nearer. There were men inside. Their voices sounded ghostly to his straining ears.

"But, friend Ricardo, he set out before dawn, and is not yet returned. I fear he has either abandoned us, or has walked into our good Rosendo's jaws."

"Hold your tongue, bleating calf!" cried the other petulantly. "It is more likely that he and Don Mario lie pickled in rum under the palms of the Alcalde's *patio!*"

José waited to hear no more. He hurried down through the main street and past the house of Don Mario. The door stood open, and he could see the portly figure of the official outlined against the back wall. It was evident that Diego was not there. He returned in perplexity to his house and sat far into the night, musing on the strange incident.

With the coming of the new day Rosendo appeared with fresh suggestions. *"Bien,* Padre," he said, "there is nothing to do now but take the girl and flee to the Boque river and to the *hacienda* of Don Nicolás."

José related his experience of the previous night. Rosendo whistled softly. *"Caramba!"* he muttered, "but this is a mystery! And—but here comes Juan."

The lad entered excitedly. "Your canoe, Don Rosendo—as I started out on the lake to fish I saw it, far in the distance. I brought it in. There was neither pole nor paddle in it. And it was half full of water. It must have drifted all night. Did it break away from its mooring, think you?"

Rosendo looked at José. The latter replied quickly: "That is the most reasonable supposition, Juan. But Rosendo is very grateful to you for securing it again."

When the lad had gone, Rosendo sat with bowed head, deeply perplexed.

"The pole and paddle, Padre, were left on the island. I took them out when we landed. Diego pushed off without them. He—the boat—it must have drifted long. But—did he land? Or—"

He stopped and scratched his head. "Padre," he said, looking up suddenly with an expression of awe upon his face, "do you suppose—do you think that the Virgin—that she—made him fall from the canoe into the lake—and that a *cayman* ate him? *Ca-ram-ba!*"

José did not vouchsafe a reply. But his heart leaped with a great hope. Rosendo, wrapped in profound meditation, wandered back to his house, his head bent, and his hands clasped tightly behind his back.

CHAPTER 29

THE rainy season dragged its reeking length through the Simití valley with fearful deliberation. José thought that he should never again see the sun. The lake steamed like a cauldron. Great clouds of heavy vapor rolled incessantly upward from the dripping jungle. The rain fell in cloud-bursts, and the narrow streets of the old town ran like streams in a freshet.

Then, one day, Rosendo abruptly announced, "Padre, the rains are breaking. The dry season is at hand. And the little Carmen is fourteen years old to-day."

It gave the priest a shock. He had been six years in Simití! And Carmen was no longer a child. Youth ripens quickly into maturity in these tropic lands. The past year had sped like a meteor across an evening sky, leaving a train of mingled light and darkness. Of Diego's fate José had learned nothing. Ricardo and his companion had disappeared without causing even a ripple of comment in Simití. Don Mario remained quiet for many weeks. But he often eyed José and Rosendo malignantly

through the wooden grill at his window, and once he ordered Fernando to stop Rosendo and ply him with many and pointed questions. The old man was noncommittal, but he left a dark suspicion, which was transmitted to the receptive mind of the Alcalde. Acting-Bishop Wenceslas likewise was growing apprehensive as the weeks went by, and both José and Don Mario were the recipients of letters of inquiry from him regarding the whereabouts of the priest Diego. In the course of time came other letters from Cartagena, and at length an order for a most scrutinizing search to be made for the Bishop's confidential agent.

It was of no avail. Rosendo's oft-repeated testimony revealed nothing. The citizens of Simití had not seen the man. The Alcalde had nothing but his suspicions to offer. And these might have fallen harmlessly upon the acting-Bishop's well occupied thought, had it not been for the complicating influence of certain other events. The first of these was the exhaustion of the gold which José and Carmen had discovered in the old church. The other was the outbreak of the religio-political revolution which Diego had predicted some six years before, and which, in these latter days, Don Jorge, on his infrequent journeys through Simití had repeatedly announced as inevitable and imminent. Their combined effect was such as to wrest Carmen away from José, and to set in a new direction the currents of their lives.

For some time past José had watched with growing anxiety the shrinking of his gold supply, and had striven to lessen the monthly contributions to Cartagena, meanwhile trying to know that the need now looming daily larger before him would be met. He had not voiced his apprehension to Carmen. But he and Rosendo had discussed the situation long and earnestly, and had at length resolved that the latter should again return to Guamocó to wash the Tiguí sands.

The old man sighed, but he uttered no protest. Yet each day José thought he grew quieter. And each day, too, he seemed to become more tender of his sad-faced daughter, Ana, and of the little grandson who had come into his humble home only a few weeks before. He delayed his preparations for specious reasons which José knew cost him much effort to invent. He clung to Carmen. He told his rosary often before the church altar, and with tears in his eyes. And at night he would come to José and beg him to read from the Bible and explain what he thought the Saviour had really meant to convey to the humble fishermen of Galilee.

José's heart was wrung. But at last the day arrived when he had nothing to send to Cartagena beyond the mere pittance

which the poor members of his little parish contributed. But this he sent as usual. The next month he did the same. Then came a letter from Wenceslas, requesting an explanation. And then it was that José realized that in his excess of zeal he had fallen into his own trap. For, having established the custom of remitting a certain amount to the Bishop each month, he must not resent now the implication of dishonesty when the remittances fell off, or ceased altogether. He took the letter to Rosendo. "*Bien*, Padre," said the latter slowly, "the time has come. I set out for Guamocó at dawn."

In the days that followed, José could frame no satisfactory reply to Wenceslas, and so the latter wrote to the Alcalde. Don Mario eagerly seized the proffered opportunity to ingratiate himself into ecclesiastical favor. Rosendo was again in the hills, he wrote, and with supplies not purchased from him. Nor had he been given even a hint of Rosendo's mission, whether it be to search again for La Libertad, or not. There could be no doubt, he explained in great detail, of José's connivance with Rosendo, and of his unauthorized conduct in the matter of educating the girl, Carmen, who, he made no doubt, was the daughter of Padre Diego—now, alas! probably cold in death at the violent hands of the girl's foster-father, and with the priest José's full approbation. The letter cost the portly Don Mario many a day of arduous labor; but it brought its reward in another inquiry from Cartagena, and this time a request for specific details regarding Carmen.

Don Mario bestrode the clouds. He dropped his customary well-oiled manner, and carried his head with the air of a conqueror. His thick lips became regnant, imperious. He treated his compatriots with supercilious disdain. And to José he would scarce vouchsafe even a cold nod as they passed in the street. Again he penned a long missive to Cartagena, in which he dilated at wearisome length upon the extraordinary beauty of the girl, as well as her unusual mental qualities. He urged immediate action, and suggested that Carmen be sent to the convent in Mompox.

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Wenceslas mused long over the Alcalde's letters. Many times he smiled as he read. Then he sent for a young clerical agent of the See, who was starting on a mission to Bogotá, and requested that he stop off a day at Badillo and go to Simití to report on conditions in that parish. Incidentally, also, to gather what data he might as to the family of one Rosendo Ariza.

In due course of time the agent made his report. The parish of Simití stood in need of a new *Cura*, he said. And the girl—he found no words to describe or explain her. She must be seen.

The Church had need of prompt action, however, to secure her. To that end, he advised her immediate removal to Cartagena.

Again Wenceslas deliberated. Aside from the girl, to whom he found his thought reverting oftener than he could wish in that particular hour of stress, his interest in Simití did not extend beyond its possibilities as a further contributor to the funds he was so greatly needing for the furtherance of his complex political plans. As to the Alcalde—here was a possibility of another sort. That fellow might become useful. He should be cultivated. And at the same time warned against precipitate action, lest he scatter Rosendo's family into flight, and the graceful bird now dwelling in the rude nest escape the sharp talons awaiting her.

He called for his secretary. "Send a message to Francisco, our Legate, who is now in Bogotá. Bid him on his return journey stop again at Simití. We require a full report on the character of the Alcalde of that town."

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Meantime, José did not permit his mental torture to interfere with Carmen's education. For six years now that had progressed steadily. And the results? Wonderful, he thought —and yet not wholly attributable to his peculiar mode of tutelage. For, after all, his work had been little more than the holding of her mind unwarped, that her instinctive sense of logic might reach those truthful conclusions which it was bound to attain if guided safely past the tortuous shifts of human speculation and undemonstrable theory. To his great joy, these six years had confirmed a belief which he had held ever since the troublous days of his youth, namely, that, as a recent writer has said, "adolescent understanding is along straight lines, and leaps where the adult can only laboriously creep." There had been no awful hold of early teaching to loosen and throw off; there were no old landmarks in her mind to remove; no tenacious, clinging effect of early associations to neutralize. And, perhaps most important of all, the child had seemed to enter the world utterly devoid of fear, and with a congenital faith, amounting to absolute knowledge, in the immanence of an omnipotent God of love. This, added to her eagerness and mental receptivity, had made his task one of constant rejoicing in the realization of his most extravagant dreams for her.

As a linguist, Carmen had become accomplished. She spoke English fluently. And it was only a matter of practice to give her a similar grasp of French, Italian, and German. As for other instruction, such knowledge of the outside world as he had deemed wise to give her in these six years had been seized upon with avidity and as quickly assimilated. But he often

speculated curiously—sometimes dubiously—upon the great surprises in store for her should she ever leave her native village. And yet, as often as such thought recurred to him he would try to choke it back, to bar his mind against it, lest the pull at his heartstrings snap them asunder.

Often as he watched her expanding so rapidly into womanhood and exhibiting such graces of manner, such amiability of disposition, such selfless regard for others, combined with a physical beauty such as he thought he had never before gazed upon, a great yearning would clutch his soul, and a lump would rise in his throat. And when, as was so often the case, her arms flew impulsively about his neck and she whispered words of tender endearment in his ear, a fierce determination would seize him, and he would clutch her to himself with such vehemence as to make her gasp for breath. That she might marry he knew to be a possibility. But the idea pierced his soul as with a sword, and he thought that to see her in the arms of another, even the man of her choice, must excite him to murder. One day, shortly after her fourteenth birthday, she came to him and, perching herself as was her wont upon his knees, and twining her arms about his neck, said, with traces of embarrassment, "Padre dear, Juan—he asked me to-day to marry him."

José caught his breath. His ears rang. She—marry a *peon* of Simití! To be sure, Juan had often reminded him of the request he had made for her hand long ago. But José had not considered the likelihood of the lad's taking his question directly to her. And the girl—

"And what did you reply?" he asked thickly.

"Padre dear—I told him that—" She stopped abruptly.

"Well, *chiquita;* you told him—what?" His voice trembled.

She flushed, still hesitating. He held her back from him and looked squarely into her wide eyes.

"You told him, *chiquita*—"

"That—well, Padre dear, I told him that—that I might never marry."

José sighed. "And do you think, little girl, that you will always hold to that resolution?"

"Yes, Padre, unless—"

"Well, *chiquita,* unless—"

"Unless you marry, too, Padre," she said, dropping her eyes.

"Unless I marry! I—a priest! But—what has that to do with it, girl?"

"Well—oh, Padre dear—can't you see? For then I would marry—" She buried her face in his shoulder.

"Yes, *chiquita,*" he said, dully wondering.

Her arms tightened about his neck. "You," she murmured.

It was the first expression of the kind that had ever come from her lips. José's heart thumped violently. The Goddess of Fortune had suddenly thrown her most precious jewel into his lap. Joy welled up in flood tides from unknown depths within. His eyes swam. Then—he remembered. And thick night fell upon his soul.

Minutes passed, and the two sat very quiet. Then Carmen raised her head. "Padre," she whispered, "you don't say anything. I know you love me. And you will not always be a priest—not always," shaking her beautiful curls with suggestive emphasis.

Why did she say that? He wondered vaguely. The people called her an *hada*. He sometimes thought they had reason to. And then he knew that she never moved except in response to a beckoning hand that still, after all these years, remained invisible to him.

"*Chiquita,*" he said in low response, "I fear—I fear that can never be. And even if—ah, *chiquita,* I am so much older than you, little girl—almost seventeen years!"

"You do not want to marry me, even if you could, Padre?" she queried, looking wistfully into his eyes, while her own grew moist.

He clutched her to him again. "Carmen!" he cried wildly, "you little know—you little know! But—child, we must not talk of these things! Wait—wait!"

"But, Padre dear," she pleaded, "just say that you *do* love me that way—just say it—your little girl wants to hear it."

God above! She, pleading that he would say he loved her! His head sank upon his breast. He silently prayed that his tortured soul might burst and let his wasted life ebb into oblivion while his pent-up misery poured out.

"Carmen!" he cried with the despair of the lost. "I love you—love you—love you! Nay, child, I adore you! God! That I might hold you thus forever!"

She reached up quickly and kissed him. "Some day, Padre dear," she murmured softly, "you will stop thinking that two and two are seven. Then everything good will come to you."

She sank back in his arms and nestled close to him, as if she longed to enter his empty heart and fill the great void with her measureless love.

"And, Padre dear," she whispered, "your little girl will wait for you—yes, she will wait."

* * * * * *

It was some days later that Rosendo, after returning almost empty handed from the hills, came to José and said, "Padre, I have sold my *hacienda* to Don Luis. I need the money to pur-

chase supplies and to get the papers through for some denouncements which I have made in Guamocó. I knew that Don Mario would put through no papers for me, and so I have asked Lázaro to make the transaction and to deliver the titles to me when the final papers arrive. I have a blank here to be filled out with the name and description of a mineral property. I—what would be a good name for a mine, Padre?"

"Why do you ask that, Rosendo?" queried José in surprise.

"Because, Padre, I want a foreign name—one not known here. Give me an American one. Think hard."

José reflected. "There is a city, a great city, that I have often heard about, up in the States," he said finally.

He took up the little atlas which he had received long since with other books from abroad. "Look," he said, "it is called Chicago. Call your property the Chicago mine, Rosendo. It is a name unknown down here, and there can no confusion arise because of it."

"Caramba!" Rosendo muttered, trying to twist his tongue around the word, "it is certain that no one else will use that name in Guamocó! But that makes my title still more secure, no?"

"But, Rosendo," said José, when the full significance of the old man's announcement had finally penetrated, "you have sold your *finca!* And to acquire title to property that you can never sell or work! Why, man! do you realize what you have done? You are impoverished! What will you do now? And what about Carmen? for we have nothing. And the sword that hangs above us may fall any day!"

"Bien, Padre, it is for her sake that I have done it. Say no more. It will work out in some way. I go back to-morrow. But, if the titles should come from Cartagena during my absence—and, Padre, if anything should happen to me—for the love of the Virgin do not let them out of your hands! They are for her."

Yet Rosendo departed not on the morrow. He remained to mingle his tears with those of the sorrowing Ana. For the woman, whose heart had been lighter since the arrival of her babe, had come to the priest that day to have the child christened. And so, before the sun might fill the *plaza* with its ardent midday heat, Rosendo and his family repaired to the church. There before the altar José baptised the little one and gave it his own name, thus triumphantly ushering the pagan babe into the Christian Catholic world. The child cried at the touch of the baptismal water.

"Now," commented Rosendo, "the devil has gone out of him, driven out by the holy water."

But, as José leaned over the babe and looked into its dark eyes, his hand stopped, and his heart stood still. He raised his head and bent a look of inquiry upon the mother. She returned the look with one that mutely voiced a stifled fear and confirmed his own. "Padre!" she whispered hoarsely. "What is it? Quick!"

He took a candle from the altar and passed it before the child's eyes.

"Padre! He sees! *Santa Virgen!* Do not tell me—*Dios mio!*" The mother's voice rose to a wail, as she snatched her babe away.

A loud exclamation escaped Rosendo. Doña Maria stood mute; but José as he looked at her divined her thought and read therein a full knowledge of the awful fact that she had never voiced to the heart-broken mother.

"Padre!" cried the perplexed Rosendo. "Maria!" turning in appeal to his wife. "Speak, some one! *Santa Virgen,* speak! Ana, what ails the child?"

José turned his head aside. Carmen crowded close to the weeping Ana. Doña Maria took Rosendo's arm.

"The babe, Rosendo," she said quietly, "was born—blind."

CHAPTER 30

THE "revolutionist" of Latin America is generally only the disgruntled politician. His revolution is seldom more than a violent squabble among greedy spoilsmen for control of the loose-jointed administration. But the great Mosquera Revolution which burst into flame in New Granada in 1861 was fed with fuel of a different nature. It demonstrated, if demonstration were necessary, that the Treaty of Westphalia did not write *finis* to the history of bloodshed in the name of Christ; that it had but banked the fires of religious animosity, until the furnace should be transferred from the Old World to the New, where the breath of liberty would again fan them into vigorous activity.

The Mosquera War tore asunder Church and State; but left unhappy Colombia prone and bleeding. It externalized a mighty protest of enlightenment against Rome's dictates in temporal affairs. And, as has before happened when that irresistible potentiality, the people, has been stirred into action, the Church was disestablished, its property confiscated, and its meddling, parasitical clergy disenfranchised.

But then, too, as almost invariably occurs when the masses

find that they have parted with cherished prejudices and effete customs, and have adopted ideas so radical as to lift them a degree higher in the scale of progress, they wavered. The Church was being humiliated. Their religion was under contempt. The holy sacrament of marriage was debased to a civil ceremony. Education was endangered by taking it out of the hands of the pious clergy. Texts unauthorized by Holy Church were being adopted. Where would this radical modernism end? The alarm spread, fanned by the watchful agents of Rome. Revolt after revolt occurred. And twenty years of incessant internecine warfare followed.

Fear and prejudice triumphed. A new Constitution was framed. And when it was seen that Roman Catholicism was therein again declared to be the national religion of the Republic of Colombia; when it was noted that the clergy, obedient to a foreign master, were to be readmitted to participation in government affairs; when it was understood that a national press-censorship was to be established, dominated by Holy Church; and when, in view of this, the great religio-political opponent was seen laying down her weapons and extending her arms in dubious benediction over the exhausted people, the masses yielded—and there was great rejoicing on the banks of the Tiber over the prodigal's return.

When Wenceslas Ortiz was placed in temporary control of the See of Cartagena he shrewdly urged the Church party to make at least a pretense of disbanding as a political organization. The provinces of Cundinamarca and Panamá were again in a state of ferment. Congress, sitting in Bogotá, had before it for consideration a measure vesting in the President the power to interfere in certain states or provinces whenever, in his opinion, the conservation of public order necessitated such action. That this measure would be passed, Wenceslas could not be sure. But that, once adopted, it would precipitate the unhappy country again into a sanguinary war, he thought he knew to a certainty. He had faced this same question six years before, when a similar measure was before Congress. But then, with a strong Church party, and believing the passage of the law to be certain, he had yielded to the counsel of hot-headed leaders in Cartagena, and approved the inauguration of hostilities.

The result had been a *fiasco*. Congress dropped the measure like a hot plate. The demands of the "revolutionists" were quickly met by the federal government. The *causae belli* evaporated. And Wenceslas retired in chagrin to the solitude of his study, to bite his nails and wonder dubiously if his party were strong enough to insure his appointment to the See of Cartagena in the event of the then aged occupant's demise.

It was this hasty judgment of Wenceslas and his political associates which had delayed further consideration of the objectionable measure for six years. But the interim had seen his party enormously strengthened, himself in control of the See, and his preparations completed for turning the revolt, whenever it should come, to his own great advantage. He had succeeded in holding the Church party aloof from actual participation in politics during the present crisis. And he was now keeping it in constant readiness to throw its tremendous influence to whichever side should offer the greatest inducements.

Time passed. The measure dragged. Congress dallied; and then prepared to adjourn. Wenceslas received a code message from his agent in Bogotá that the measure would be laid on the table. At the same time came a sharp prod from New York. The funds had been provided to finance the impending revolution. The concessions to be granted were satisfactory. Why the delay? Had the Church party exaggerated its influence upon Congress?

Wenceslas stormed aloud. *"Santa Virgen!"* he muttered, as he paced angrily back and forth in his study. "A curse upon Congress! A curse—"

He stopped still. In the midst of his imprecations an idea occurred to him. He went to his *escritorio* and drew out the Legate's recent report. "Ah," he mused, "that pig-headed Alcalde. And the good little José. They may serve. *Bien,* we shall see."

Then he summoned his secretary and dictated telegrams to Bogotá and New York, and a long letter to the Alcalde of Simití. These finished, he called a young acolyte in waiting.

"Take a message to the Governor," he commanded. "Say to His Excellency that I shall call upon him at three this afternoon, to discuss matters of gravest import." Dismissing his secretary, he leaned back in his chair and dropped into a profound revery.

Shortly before the hour which he had set for conference with the Departmental Governor, Wenceslas rose and went to his *escritorio,* from which he took a paper-bound book.

"H'm," he commented aloud. " 'Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest.' *Bien,* I was correct in my surmise that I should some day have use for this little volume. Poor, misguided Rincón! But—*Bien,* I think it will do—I think it will do."

A smile played over his handsome, imperious face. Then he snapped the book shut and took up his hat. At the door he hesitated a moment, with his hand on the knob.

"If the Alcalde were not such a fool, it would be impossi-

ble," he mused. "But—the combination—the isolation of Simití —the imbecility of Don Mario—the predicament of our little José—*Hombre!* it is a rare situation, and it will work. It *must* work—*cielo!* With the pig-headed Alcalde seizing government arms to suppress the Church party as represented by the foolish José, and with the President sending federal troops to quell the disturbance, the anticlericals will rise in a body throughout the country. Then Congress will hastily pass the measure to support the President, the Church party will swing into line with the Government—and the revolution will be on. Simití provides the setting and the fuel; I, the torch. I will cable again to Ames when I leave the Governor." He swung the door open and went briskly out.

* * * * * *

"Padre, I am crushed."

It was Rosendo who spoke. He and José were sitting out in the gathering dusk before the parish house on the evening of the day that Ana's babe had been christened. The old man's head was sunk upon his breast, and he rocked back and forth groaning aloud.

"We must be brave, Rosendo," returned José tenderly. "We have gone through much, you and I, since I came to Simití. But—we have believed it to be in a good cause. Shall we surrender now?"

"But, Padre, after it all, to have her babe come into the world blind! God above! The poor child—the poor child! Padre, it is the last thing that I can endure. My ambition is gone. I cannot return now to Guamocó. Let come what may, I am done."

"Rosendo," said José, drawing his chair closer to the old man, and laying a hand on his, "we have fought long and hard. But, if I mistake not, the greatest struggle is yet to come. The greatest demand upon your strength and mine is still to be made."

Rosendo raised his head. "What mean you, Padre?"

José spoke low and earnestly. "This: Juan returned from Bodega Central this evening. He reports that several large boxes are there, consigned to Don Mario, and bearing the government stamp. He found one of them slightly broken, and he peered within. What think you it contained? Rifles!"

Rosendo stared at the priest dumbly. José went on:

"I did not intend to tell you this until morning. But it is right that you should hear it now, that your courage may rise in the face of danger. What think you? The federal government is sending arms to Simití to establish a base here at the outlet of the Guamocó region, and well hidden from the Mag-

dalena river. This town is to become a military depot, unless I mistake the signs. And danger no longer threatens, but is at our door."

"Ca-ram-ba!" Rosendo rose slowly and drew himself up to his full height. "War!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper.

"There is no question about it, Rosendo," replied José gravely. "And I have no reason to doubt the truth of Diego's prophecy, that this time it will be one to be reckoned with."

"Hombre! And Carmen?"

"Take her into the hills, Rosendo. Start to-morrow."

"But you?"

José's thought was dwelling on his last talk with the girl. Again he felt her soft arms about his neck, and her warm breath against his cheek. He felt her kiss, and heard again her words, the sweetest, he thought, that had ever echoed in mortal ears. And then he thought of his mother, of his office, of the thousand obstacles that loomed huge and insurmountable between him and Carmen. He passed a hand across his brow and sighed heavily.

"I remain here, Rosendo. I am weary, unutterably weary. I welcome, not only the opportunity for service which this war may bring, but likewise the hope of—death. If I could but know that she were safe—"

"Caramba! Think you she would leave you here, Padre? No!" Did Rosendo's words convey aught to the priest that he did not already know?

"But—Rosendo, I shall not go," he returned bitterly.

"Then neither do we, Padre," replied Rosendo, sitting again. "The child, Carmen—she—Padre, she loves you with a love that is not of the earth."

* * * * * *

Morning found the old man's conviction still unshaken. José sought the quiet of his cottage to reflect. But his meditations were interrupted by Carmen.

"Padre," she began, sparkling like a mountain rill in the sunlight as she seated herself before him. "Pepito—Anita's babe—he is not blind, you know." Her head bobbed vigorously, as was her wont when she sought to give emphasis to her dramatic statements.

José smiled, and resigned himself to the inevitable. He had been expecting this.

"And, Padre, have you been thankful that he isn't?"

"Isn't what, child?"

"Blind. You know, Padre Diego thought he couldn't see the reality. He looked always at his bad thoughts. And so the not seeing, and the seeing of only bad things, were both—

externalized, and the babe came to us without sight. That is, without what the human mind calls sight. And now," she went on excitedly, "you and I have just *got* to know that it isn't so! The babe sees. God's children all see. And I have thanked Him all morning that this is so, and that you and I see it. Don't we, Padre dear? Yes, we do."

"Well—I suppose so," replied José abstractedly, his thought still occupied with the danger that hung over the little town.

"Suppose so! You *know* so, Padre! There isn't any 'suppose' about it! Now look: what makes sight? The eye? No. The eye is made *by* the sight. The human mind just gets it twisted about. It thinks that sight depends upon the optic nerve, and upon the fleshly eye. But it isn't so. It is the sight that externalizes the 'meaty' eye. You see, the sight is within, not without. It is mental. God is all-seeing; and so, sight is eternal. Don't you see? Of course you do!"

José did not reply. Yes, he did see. But what he saw was the beautiful, animated girl before him. And the thought that he must some day be separated from her was eating his heart like a canker.

"Well, then," went on the girl, without waiting for his reply, "if a mortal's mental concept of sight is poor, why, he will manifest poor eyes. If the thought-concept were right, the manifestation would be right. Wouldn't it?"

José suddenly returned to the subject under discussion. "By that I suppose you mean, *chiquita,* that the babe's thought, or concept, of sight was all wrong, and so he came into the world blind."

"Not at all, Padre," she quickly replied. "The babe had nothing to do with it, except to seem to manifest the wrong thoughts of its father, or mother, or both. Or perhaps it manifests just simply bad thoughts, without the bad thoughts belonging to anybody. For, you know, we none of us really *have* such thoughts. And such thoughts don't really exist. They are just a part of the one big lie about God."

"Then the babe sees?"

"Surely; the real babe is a child of God, and sees."

"But the human babe doesn't see," he retorted.

"But," she replied, "what you call the human babe is only your mental concept of the babe. And you see that mental concept as a blind one. Now *un-see* it. Look at it in the right way. See only God's child, with perfect sight. And, Padre, after a while *you will see that babe seeing things, just as we do!*

"Don't you understand?" she exclaimed, as he sat looking fixedly at her. "Don't you see that if you have the right thought about the babe, and hold to it, and put out every thought that

says it is blind, why, your right thought will be externalized in a mental concept of a babe that sees? Don't you know that that is exactly what Jesus did? He didn't affect the real man at all. But he did change the mental concepts which we call human beings. And we can do the same, if we only know it, and follow him, and spiritualize our thought, as he did, by putting out and keeping out every thought that we know does not come from God, and that is, therefore, only a part of the lie about Him. Here is a case where we have got to quit thinking that two and two are seven. And I have done it. It is God's business to make our concepts right. And He has done so—long since. And we will see these right concepts if we will put out the wrong ones!"

"Well?" he queried lamely, wholly at a loss for any other answer.

"Well, Padre, I am not a bit afraid. I don't see a blind babe at all, because there just can't be any. And neither do you. The babe sees because God sees."

"In other words, you don't intend to allow yourself to be deceived by appearances?" he suggested.

"That is just it, Padre!" she exclaimed. "Blindness is only an appearance. But it doesn't appear to God. It appears only to the human mind—which isn't any mind at all! And the appearance can be made to disappear, if we know the truth and stick to it. For any appearance of a human body is a mental concept, that's all."

"A thing of thought, then?" he said.

"Yes, a thing of *wrong* thought. But all wrong thought is subject to God's right thought. We've proved that, haven't we, lots of times? Well, this wrong thought about a babe that is blind can be changed—made to disappear—just as any lie can be made to disappear when we know the truth. And so you and I are not going to be afraid, are we? I told Anita this morning not to worry, but to just *know* all the time that her babe did see, no matter what the appearance was. And she smiled at me, Padre, she smiled. And I know that she trusts, and is going to work with you and me."

Work with her! Heavens! had he done aught of late but work against her by his constant harboring of fears, of doubts, and his distrust of spiritual power?

"Padre," she resumed, "I want you to promise me that every day you will thank God that the babe really sees. And that you will turn right on every thought of blindness and know that it is a part of the lie about God, and put it right out of your mind. Will you?"

"But—child—if my mind tells me that the babe is blind, how can I—"

"I don't care what your mind tells you about the babe! You are to listen to what God tells you, not your human mind! Does God tell you that the babe is blind? Does He?" she repeated, as the man hesitated.

"Why, no, *chiquita,* He—"

"Listen, Padre," she interrupted again, drawing closer to him. "Is God good, or bad, or both?"

"He is good, *chiquita,* all good."

"Infinite good, then, no?"

"Yes."

"And we have long since proved by actual reasoning and demonstration that He is mind, and so infinite mind, no?"

"It must be conceded, Carmen."

"Well, an infinite mind has all power. And an infinite, all-powerful mind that is all good could not possibly create anything bad, or sick, or discordant—now could He?"

"Utterly impossible, little girl."

"The Bible says so. Our reasoning tells us so. But—the five physical senses tell us differently. Don't they?"

"Yes."

"And yet, we know that the five physical senses *do not tell us truth!* We know that when the human mind thinks it is receiving reports about things through the five physical senses it is doing nothing more than looking at its own thoughts. Now isn't that so?"

"It certainly seems so, little one."

"The thoughts of an infinite and good mind must be like that mind, all good, no? Well, then, thoughts of discord, disease, blindness, and death—do they come from the infinite, good mind? No!"

"Well, *chiquita mia,* that is just the sticking point. I can see all the rest. But the mighty question is, where *do* those thoughts come from? I am quite as ready as you to admit that discord, sin, evil, death, and all the whole list of human ills and woes come from these bad thoughts held in the human mind and so externalized. I believe that the human man really sees, feels, hears, smells, and tastes these thoughts—that the functioning of the physical senses is wholly mental—takes place in mind, in thought only. That is, that the human mind thinks it sees, feels, hears; but that the whole process is mental, and that it is but regarding its thoughts, instead of actually regarding and cognizing objects outside of itself. Do you follow me?"

"Of course," she replied with animation. "Isn't that just what I am trying to tell you?"

"But—and here is the great obstacle—we differentiate be-

tween good and bad thoughts. We agree that a fountain can not send forth sweet and bitter waters at the same time. And so, good and bad thoughts do not come from the infinite mind that we call God. But where do the others originate? Answer that, *chiquita,* and my problems will all be solved."

She looked at him in perplexity for some time. It seemed to her that she never would understand him. But, with a little sigh of resignation, she replied:

"Padre, you answered that question yourself, long ago. You worked it all out three or four years ago. But—you haven't stuck to it. You let the false testimony of the physical senses mesmerize you again. Instead of sticking to the thoughts that you knew to be good, and holding to them, in spite of the pelting you got from the others, you have looked first at the good, and then at the bad, and then believed them all to be real, and all to be powerful. And so you got miserably mixed up. And the result is that you don't know where you stand. Do you? Or, you think you don't; for that thought, too, is a bad one, and has no power at all, excepting the power that you seem willing—and glad—to give it."

He winced under the poignant rebuke. He knew in his heart that she was right. He had not clung to the good, despite the roars of Satan. He had not "resisted unto blood." Far from it; he had fallen, almost invariably, at the first shower of the adversary's darts. And now, was he not trying, desperately, to show her that Ana's babe was blind, hopelessly so? Was he not fighting on evil's side, and vigorously, though with shame suffusing his face, waving aloft the banner of error?

"The trouble with you, Padre," the girl resumed, after some moments of reflection, "is that you—you see everything—well, you see everything as a person, or a thing."

"You mean that I always associate thought with personality?" he suggested.

"That's it! But you have got to learn to deal with thoughts and ideas by themselves, apart from any person or thing. You have got to learn to deal with facts and their opposites entirely apart from places, or things, or people. Now if I say that Life is eternal, I have stated a mental thing. That is the fact. Its opposite, that is, the opposite of Life, is death. One opposes the other. But God is Life. Is God also death? He can't be. Life is the fact. Then death must be the illusion. That being so, Life is the reality, and death is the unreality. Very well, what makes death seem real? It is just because the false thought of death comes into the human mind, and is held there as a reality, as something that has *got* to happen. And that strong belief becomes externalized in what mortals call death.

Don't you see? Is there a person in the whole world who doesn't think that some time he has got to die? No, not one! But now suppose every person held the belief that death was an illusion, a part of the big lie about God, just as Jesus said it was. Well, wouldn't we get rid of death in a hurry? I should think so! And is there a person in the whole world who wouldn't say that Anita's babe was blind? No, not one! They would look at the human thought of blindness, instead of God's real idea of sight, and so they would make and keep the babe blind. Don't you understand me, Padre dear? Don't you? I know you do, for you really see as God sees!"

She stopped for breath. Her eyes glistened, and her whole body seemed to radiate the light of knowledge divine. Then she went hurriedly on:

"Padre, everything is mental. You know that, for you told me so, long since. Well, that being so, we have got to face the truth that every mental fact seems to have an opposite, or a lot of opposites, also seemingly mental. The opposite of a fact is an illusion. The opposite of truth is a lie. Well, God is the great fact. Infinite mind is the infinite fact. The so-called opposite of this infinite fact is the human mind, the many so-called minds of mankind—*a kind of man*. But everything is still mental. Now, an illusion, or a lie, does not *really* exist. If I tell you that two and two are seven, that lie does not exist. Is it in what we call my mind, or yours? No. Even if you say you believe it, that doesn't make it real. Nor does it show that it has real existence in your mind. Not a bit of it! But—if you hold it, and cling to it—allow it to stay with you and influence you—why, Padre dear, everything in your whole life will be changed!

"Let me take your pencil—and a piece of paper. Look now," drawing a line down through the paper. "On one side, Padre, is the infinite mind, God, and all His thoughts and ideas, all good, perfect and eternal. On the other side is the lie about it all. That is still mental; but it is illusion, falsity. It includes all sin, all sickness, all murder, all evil, accidents, loss, failure, bad ambitions, and death. These are all parts of the big lie about God—His unreal opposite. These are the so-called thoughts that come to the human mind. Where do they come from? From nowhere. The human mind looks at them, tastes them, feels them, holds them; and then they become its beliefs. After a while the human mind looks at nothing but these beliefs. It believes them to be real. And, finally, it comes to believe that God made them and sent them to His children. Isn't it awful, Padre! And aren't you glad that you know about it? And aren't you going to learn how to keep the good on one side of that line and the illusion on the other?"

It seemed to José a thing incredible that these words were coming from a girl of fifteen. And yet he knew that at the same tender age he was as deeply serious as she—but with this difference: he was then tenaciously clinging to the thoughts that she was now utterly repudiating as unreal and non-existent.

"Padre dear," the girl resumed, "everything is mental. The whole universe is mental."

"Well," he replied reflectively, "at least our comprehension of it is wholly mental."

"Why—it is all inside—it is all in our thought! Padre, when Hernando plays on that old pipe of his, where is the music? Is it in the pipe? Or is it in our thoughts?"

"But, *chiquita,* we don't seem to have it in our thought until we seem to see him playing on the pipe, do we?"

"No, we don't," she replied. "And do you know why? It is just because the human mind believes that everything, even music, must come from matter—must have a—"

"Must have a material origin? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes. And men even believe that life itself has a material origin; and so they have wasted centuries trying to find it in the body. They don't seem to want to know that God is life."

"Then, *chiquita,* you do not believe that matter is real?"

"There is no matter outside of us, or around us, Padre," she said in reply. "The human mind looks at its thoughts and seems to see them out around it as things made of matter. But, after all, it only sees its thoughts."

"Then I suppose that the externalization of our thought in our consciousness constitutes what we call space, does it not?"

"It must, Padre," she answered.

He studied a moment. Then:

"*Chiquita,* how do you know me? What do you see that you call 'me'?"

"Why, Padre, I see you as God does—at least, I try always to see you that way?" she answered earnestly. "And that is the way Jesus always saw people."

"God sees me, of course. But, does He see me as I see myself?" he mused aloud.

"You do not see yourself, Padre," was her reply. "You see only the thoughts that you call yourself. Thoughts of mind and body and all those things that go to form a human being."

"Well—yes, I must agree with you there; for, though God certainly knows me, He cannot know me as I think I know myself, sinful and discordant."

"He knows the real 'you,' Padre dear. And that is just as He is. He knows that the unreal 'you,' the 'you' that you think

you know, is illusion. If He knew the human, mortal 'you' as real, He would have to know evil. And that can not be."

"No, for the Bible says He is of eyes too pure to behold evil."

"Well, Padre, why don't you try to be like Him?"

But the girl needed not that he should answer her question. She knew why he had failed, for "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." She knew that José's struggle to overcome evil had been futile, because he had first made evil real. She knew that the difficulty he had experienced in keeping his thought straight was because he persisted in looking at both the good and the evil. Lot's wife, in the Bible allegory, had turned back to look at things material and had been transformed into a pillar of salt. José had turned again and again to his materialistic thoughts; and had been turned each time to salt tears. She knew that he gave up readily, that he yielded easily to evil's strongest tool, discouragement, and fell back into self-condemnation, whereby he only rendered still more real to himself the evil which he was striving to overcome. She knew that the only obstacle that he was wrestling with in his upward progress was the universal belief in a power other than God, good, which is so firmly fixed in the human consciousness. But she likewise knew that this hindrance was but a false conviction, and that it could and would be overcome.

"Padre," she reflected, looking up at him in great seriousness, "if a lie had an origin, it would be true, wouldn't it?"

He regarded her attentively, but without replying.

"But Jesus said that Satan was the father of lies. And Satan, since he is the father of lies, must himself be a lie. You see, Padre, we can go right back to the very first chapter in the Bible. First comes the account of the real creation. Then comes the account as the human mind looks at it. But that comes after the 'mist' had gone up from the ground, from dirt, from matter. Don't you see? That mist was error, the opposite of Good. It was evil, the opposite of God. It was the human mind and all human thought, the opposite of the infinite Mind, God, and His thought. The mist went up from matter. So every bit of evil that you can possibly think of comes from the material, physical senses. Evil is always a mist, hiding the good. Isn't it so? The physical universe, the universe of matter, is the way the human mind sees its thoughts of the spiritual universe that was created by God. The human mind is just a bundle of these false thoughts; and you yourself have said that the human consciousness was a 'thought-activity, concerned with the activity of false thought.' The human mind is

the lie about the infinite mind. It is the mistake, the illusion. It is like a mistake in mathematics. It has no principle, and nothing to stand on. The minute you turn the truth upon it, why, it vanishes."

"Well, then, *chiquita,* why don't people turn the truth upon it everywhere?"

"Because they are mesmerized by the error, Padre. They sit looking at these false thoughts and believing them true. Padre, all disease, all evil, comes from the false thought in the human mind. It is that thought externalized in the human consciousness. And when the human mind turns from them, and puts them out, and lets the true thoughts in, why—why, *then we will raise the dead!*"

"But, *chiquita,* the human body—if it has died—"

"Padre," she interrupted, "the human body and human mind are one and the same. The body is in the mind. The body that you think you see is but your thought of a body, and *is in your so-called human mind!*"

"Do you really understand that, child?"

"I *know* it!" she exclaimed. "And so would you if you read your Bible in the right way. Why—I had never seen a Bible until you gave me yours. I didn't know what a book it was! And to think that it has been in the world for thousands of years, and yet people still kill one another, still get sick, and still die! I don't see how they can!"

"But, *chiquita,* people are too busy to devote time to demonstrating the truths of the Bible," he offered.

"Too busy!" she ejaculated. "Busy with what?"

"Why—busy making money—busy socially—busy having a good time—busy accumulating things that—that they must go away and leave to somebody else!"

"Yes," she said sadly. "They are like the people Jesus spoke of, too busy with things that are of no account to see the things that are—that are—"

"That are priceless, *chiquita*—that are the most vital of all things to sinful, suffering mankind," he supplied.

Rosendo looked in at the door. José motioned him away. These hours with Carmen had become doubly precious to him of late. Perhaps he felt a presentiment that the net about him and his loved ones was drawing rapidly tighter. Perhaps he saw the hour swiftly approaching, even at hand, when these moments of spiritual intercourse would be rudely terminated. And perhaps he saw the clouds lowering ever darker above them, and knew that in the blackness which was soon to fall the girl would leave him and be swept out into the great world of human thoughts and events, to meet, alone with her God, the

fiercest elements, the subtlest wiles, of the carnal mind. As for himself—he was in the hands of that same God.

He turned again to the girl. *"Chiquita,"* he said, "you do not find mistakes in the Bible? For, out in the big world where I came from, there are many, very many, who say that it is a book of inconsistencies, of gross inaccuracies, and that its statements are directly opposed to the so-called natural sciences. They say that it doesn't even relate historical events accurately. But, after all, the Bible is just the record of the unfoldment in the human consciousness of the concept of God. Why cavil at it when it contains, as we must see, a revelation of the full formula for salvation, which, as you say, is right-thinking."

"Yes, Padre. And it even tells us what to think about. Paul said, you know, that we should think about whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Well, he told us that there was no law—not even any human law—against those things. And don't you know, he wrote about bringing into captivity every thought to Christ? What did he mean by that?"

"Just what you have been telling me, I guess, *chiquita:* that every thought must be measured by the Christ-principle. And if it doesn't conform to that standard, it must be rejected."

"Yes. And then he said that he died daily. He did die daily to evil, to all evil thought—"

"And to the testimony of the physical senses, think you?"

"He must have! For, in proving God to be real, he had to prove the reports of the five physical senses to be only human beliefs."

"You are right, *chiquita.* He must have known that the corporeal senses were the only source from which evil came. He must have known that unless God testified in regard to things, any other testimony was but carnal belief. This must be so, for God, being infinite mind, is also infinite intelligence. He knows all things, and knows them aright—not as the human mind thinks it knows them, twisted and deformed, but right."

"Of course, Padre. You know now that you see it right. And can't you *stick* to it, and prove it?"

"Chiquita," he answered, shaking his head again, his words still voicing a lingering note of doubt, "it may be—the 'I' that I call myself may be entirely human, unreal, mortal. I make no doubt it is, for it seems filled to the brim with discordant thoughts. And it will pass away. And then—then what will be left?"

"Oh, Padre!" she cried, with a trace of exasperation. "Empty yourself of the wrong thoughts—shut the door against them—don't let them in any more! Then fill yourself with

God's thoughts. Then when the mortal part fades away, why, the good will be left. And it will be the right 'you.' "

"But how shall I empty myself, and then fill myself again?"

"Padre!" cried the girl, springing from her chair and stamping her foot with each word to give it emphasis. "It is love, love, love, nothing but love! Forget yourself, and love everything and everybody, the real things and the real bodies! Love God, and good, and good thoughts! Turn from the bad and the unreal—forget it! Why—"

"Wait, *chiquita,*" he interrupted. "A great war is threatening our country at this very minute. Shall I turn from it and let come what may?"

She hesitated not. "No! But you can know that war comes only from the human mind; that it is bad thought externalized; and that God is peace, and is infinitely greater than such bad thought; and He will take care of you—if you will let Him!"

"And how do I let Him? By sitting back and folding my hands and saying, Here am I, Lord, protect me—"

"Oh, Padre dear, you make me ashamed of your foolish thought—which isn't your thought at all, but just thought that seems to be calling itself 'you.' Jesus said, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do likewise. But that did not mean sitting back with folded hands. It meant *understanding* him; and knowing that there is no power apart from the Christ-principle; and using that principle, using it every moment, *hard;* and with it overcoming every thought that doesn't come from God, every thought of the human mind, whether it is called war, or sickness, or death!"

"Then evil can be thought away, *chiquita?*" He knew not why he pursued her so relentlessly.

"No, Padre," she replied with a gentle patience that smote him. "No, Padre. But it can be destroyed in the human mind. And when you have overcome the habit of thinking the wrong way, evil will disappear. That is the whole thing. That is what Jesus tried to make the people see."

But José knew it. Yet he had not put it to the proof. He had gone through life, worrying himself loose from one human belief, only to become enslaved to another equally insidious. He knew that the cause of whatever came to him was within his own mentality. And yet he knew, likewise, that he would have to demonstrate this—that he would be called upon to "prove" God. His faith without the works following was dead. He felt that he did not really believe in power opposed to God; and yet he did constantly yield to such belief. And such yielding was the chief of sins. The unique Son of God had said so. He knew that when the Master had said, "Behold, I give you

power over all the enemy," he meant that the Christ-principle would overcome every false claim of the human mentality, whether that claim be one of physical condition or action, or a claim of environment and event. He knew that all things were possible to God, and likewise to the one who understood and faithfully applied the Christ-principle. Carmen believed that good alone was real and present. She applied this knowledge to every-day affairs. And in so doing she denied reality to evil. He must let go. He must turn upon the claims of evil to life and intelligence. His false sense of righteousness *must* give place to the spiritual sense of God as immanent good. He knew that Carmen's great love was an impervious armor, which turned aside the darts of the evil one, the one lie. He knew that his reasoning from the premise of mixed good and evil was false, and the results chaotic. And knowing all this, he knew that he had touched the hem of the garment of the Christ-understanding. There remained, then, the test of fire. And it had come. Would he stand?

"Padre," said Carmen, going to him and putting her arms about his neck, "you say that you think a great war is coming. But you needn't be afraid. Don't you remember what it says in the book of Isaiah? 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' No weapon of evil can touch you, if you understand God. Every tongue of the human mind that rises to judge you, to sentence you, shall be condemned. You will condemn it—you *must!* This is your heritage, given you by God. And your righteousness, your right-thinking, must come from God. Your thoughts must be His. Then—"

"Yes, yes, *chiquita,*" he said, drawing her to him.

"And now, Padre, you will promise me that you will know every day that Anita's babe is not blind—that it sees, because God sees?"

"Yes, *chiquita,* I promise."

"Padre dear," she murmured, nestling close to him, "I love you so much, so much!"

He answered not, except in the tightening of the arm that was about her.

CHAPTER 31

IN the weeks that followed there were days when the very air seemed pregnant with potential destruction, awaiting only the daring hand that would render it kinetic. José dwelt in a state of incessant, heart-shaking agitation. The sudden precipitation of the revolt six years before had caught him wholly unprepared, unaware even of the events which had led to it. In the intervening years, however, he had had some opportunity, even in his isolation, to study political conditions in that unhappy country, and to form some estimate of the mental forces at work in both Church and State which, he knew, must ultimately bring them again into conflict for supremacy. His knowledge of the workings of the human mind convinced him that Diego's dire prophecy had not been empty; that the Church, though ostensibly assuming only spiritual leadership, would nevertheless rest not until the question "Who shall be greatest?" even in the petty, sordid affairs of mortals, should be answered, and answered—though by force of arms—in her favor. And his estimate of the strength of the opposing parties had led him to believe that the impending struggle would drench the land in blood.

As to the *rôle* which Wenceslas would play, he could form no satisfactory estimate. He knew him to be astute, wary, and the shrewdest of politicians. He knew, likewise, that he was acting in conjunction with powerful financial interests in both North America and Europe. He knew him to be a man who would stop at no scruple, hesitate at no dictate of conscience, yield to no moral or ethical code; one who would play Rome against Wall Street, with his own unfortunate country as the stake; one who would hurl the fairest sons of Colombia at one another's throats to bulge his own coffers; and then wring from the wailing widows their poor substance for Masses to move their beloved dead through an imagined purgatory.

But he could not know that, in casting about impatiently for an immediate *causus belli*, Wenceslas had hit upon poor, isolated, little Simití as the point of ignition, and the pitting of its struggling priest against Don Mario as the method of exciting the necessary spark. He could not know that Wenceslas had represented to the Departmental Governor in Cartagena that an obscure *Cura* in far-off Simití, an exile from the Vatican, and the author of a violent diatribe against papal authority, was the nucleus about which anticlerical sentiment was crystallizing in the Department of Bolívar. He did not know

that the Governor had been induced by the acting-Bishop's specious representations to send arms to Simití, to be followed by federal troops only when the crafty Wenceslas saw that the time was ripe. He did not even suspect that Don Mario was to be the puppet whom Wenceslas would sacrifice on the altar of rapacity when he had finished with him, and that the simple-minded Alcalde in his blind zeal to protect the Church would thereby proclaim himself an enemy of both Church and State, and afford the smiling Wenceslas the most fortuitous of opportunities to reveal the Church's unexampled magnanimity by throwing her influence in with that of the Government against their common enemy.

His own intercourse with Wenceslas during the years of his exile in Simití had been wholly formal, and not altogether disagreeable as long as the contributions of gold to the Bishop's leaking coffers continued. He had received almost monthly communications from Cartagena, relating to the Church at large, and, at infrequent intervals, to the parish of Simití. But he knew that Cartagena's interest in Simití was merely casual —nay, rather, financial—and he strove to maintain it so, lest the stimulation of a deeper interest thwart his own plans. His conflict with Diego in regard to Carmen had seemed for the moment to evoke the Bishop's interference; and the sudden and unaccountable disappearance of that priest had threatened to expose both José and Carmen to the full scrutiny of Wenceslas. But, fortunately, the insistence of those matters which were rapidly culminating in a political outbreak left Wenceslas little time for interference in affairs which did not pertain exclusively to the momentous questions with which he was now concerned, and José and Carmen were still left unmolested. It was only when, desperate lest Congress adjourn without passing the measure which he knew would precipitate the conflict, and when, well nigh panic-stricken lest his collusion with Ames and his powerful clique of Wall Street become known through the exasperation of the latter over the long delay, he had resolved to pit Don Mario against José in distant Simití, and, in that unknown, isolated spot, where close investigation would never be made, apply the torch to the waiting combustibles, that José saw the danger which had always hung over him and the girl suddenly descending upon them and threatening anew the separation which he had ever regarded as inevitable, and yet which he had hoped against hope to avoid.

With the deposition of arms in Simití, and the establishment of federal authority in Don Mario, that always pompous official rose in his own esteem and in the eyes of a few para-

sitical attachés to an eminence never before dreamed of by the humble denizens of this moss-encrusted town. From egotistical, Don Mario became insolent. From sluggishness and torpidity of thought and action, he rose suddenly into tremendous activity. He was more than once observed by José or Rosendo emerging hastily from his door and button-holing some one of the more influential citizens of the town and excitedly reading to him excerpts from letters which he had just received from Cartagena. He might be seen at any hour of the day in the little *patio* back of his store, busily engaged with certain of the men of the place in examining papers and documents, talking volubly and with much excited gesticulation and wild rolling of the eyes. A party seemed to be crystallizing about him. His hitherto uncertain prestige appeared to be soaring greatly. Men who before made slighting remarks about him, or opposed his administrative acts, were now often seen in earnest converse with him. His manner toward José and Rosendo became that of utter contempt. He often refused to notice the priest as they passed in the streets.

José's apprehension waxed great. It attained its climax when Rosendo came to him one day to discuss the Alcalde's conduct and the change of sentiment which seemed to be stealing rapidly over the hearts of the people of Simití.

"Padre," said the old man in perplexity, "I cannot say what it is, but Don Mario has some scheme in hand, and—and I do not think it is for our good. I cannot get anything out of those with whom he talks so continually, but Lázaro tells me that—*Bien,* that he learns that Don Mario suspects you of—of not belonging to the Church party."

José smiled. Don Mario's suspicions about him had been many and varied, especially as La Libertad mine had not been discovered. He said as much to Rosendo in reply; and as he did so, he thought the old man's face took on a queer and unwonted expression.

"But, Padre," continued Rosendo at length, "they say that Don Mario has word from the Bishop that you once wrote a book against the Holy Father—"

"Good God!" The words burst from the priest's lips like the sudden issuance of pent steam. Rosendo stared at him in bewilderment.

"Rosendo!" gasped José. "How know you that?"

"*Caramba,* Padre! it is what Lázaro tells me," replied the old man, his own suspicion verging upon conviction.

José's dark face became almost white, and his breath sobbed out in gasps. A vague idea of the game Wenceslas was playing now stole through his throbbing brain. That book,

his Nemesis, his pursuing Fate, had tracked him to this secluded corner of the earth, and in the hands of the most unscrupulous politician of South America was being used as a tool. But, precisely to what end, his wild thought did not as yet disclose. Still, above the welter of it all, he saw clearly that there must be no further delay on his part. Before he could speak, however, Rosendo had resumed the conversation.

"Padre," he said, "had it occurred to you that you were watched, day and night?"

"No—heavens!" José had not suspected such a thing.

"It is so, Padre. Don Mario's men keep you in sight during the day; and at night there is always some one hovering near your house. You could not escape now even if you would."

José sank back in his chair limp and cold. His frenzied brain held but one thought: he had delayed until too late—and the end was at hand!

"Padre," said Rosendo earnestly, "tell me about that book. You did write it? And against the Holy Father? But—you still say the Mass. You have not brought Carmen up in the Church. But it was I who told you not to—that her heart was her church, and it must not be disturbed. But—is it true, as the people say, that you really belong to the party that would destroy the Church?"

Then José collected himself. While his heart burned within his breast, he opened its portals and revealed to Rosendo all that lay within. Beginning with his boyhood, he drew his career out before the wondering eyes of the old man down to the day when the culmination of carnal ambition, false thought, perverted concepts of filial devotion and sacredness of oath, of family honor and pride of race, had washed him up against the dreary shores of Simití. With no thought of concealment, he exposed his ambition in regard to Carmen —even the love for her that he knew must die of inanition—and ended by throwing himself without reserve upon Rosendo's judgment. When the tense recital was ended, Rosendo leaned over and clasped the priest's trembling hand.

"I understand, Padre," he said gently. "I am dull of wit, I know. And you have often laughed at my superstitions and old family beliefs, whether religious or otherwise. They are strange—I admit that. And I shall die in the Church, and take my chances on the future, for I have tried to live a good life. But—with a man like you—I understand. And now, Padre, we have no time to be sorrowful. We must be up and doing. We are like fish in a net. But—my life is yours. And both are Carmen's, is it not so? Thanks be to the good Virgin,"

he muttered, as he walked slowly away, "that Lázaro got those titles from Don Mario to-day!"

* * * * * *

Nightfall brought an unexpected visitor in the person of Don Jorge, who had returned from the remoter parts of the Guamocó region.

"*Bien,* and what news?" he called cheerily, as he strode into the parish house, where Rosendo and José were in earnest conversation.

José embraced him as a brother, while a great sense of relief stole over him. Then he quickly made known to him the situation.

Don Jorge whistled softly. He ceased his task of scraping the caked mud from his bare limbs, and drew up a chair near José.

"So you wrote a book, no? And rapped the sacred priesthood? *Hombre!* That is good! I never did think you a real priest. But, *amigo,* lend me a copy, for I doubt not it is most excellent reading, and will serve to while away many a weary hour in the jungle." His eyes snapped merrily, and he slapped José roundly upon the back when he finished speaking.

"But," he continued more seriously, "things seem to be setting against you, friend. However, let me but canvass the town to-morrow, and by evening I can advise. *Caramba!* this old hole a military depot! Who would have thought it! And yet—and yet—I wonder why the Governor sends arms here. *Bien,* we shall see."

Don Jorge needed not a full day to correctly estimate the situation in Simití. His bluff, hearty manner and genial good-nature constituted a passport to every house, and by midday he had talked with nearly every man in the *pueblo.* He called José and Rosendo for consultation during the *siesta.*

"*Bien,*" he said, when they were seated in the parish house, "Don Mario without doubt descends from the very serpent that tempted our mother Eve! He has become a person of considerable importance since the Governor and Don Wenceslas strive with each other to rest their authority and confidence in him. And, unless I mistake much, they have him slated for important work. However that may be, the man already has a large following. Moreover, he has them well poisoned against you, *amigo* José. They know more details about your book and your life before coming to Simití than do you. *Bien,* you must counteract the Alcalde's influence by a public statement. It must be to-night—in the church! You will have to act quickly, for the old fox has you picked for trouble! Diego's disappearance, you know; the girl, Carmen; your rather foolish

course here—it is all laid up against you, friend, and you must meet it!"

José assented. Don Jorge went out and summoned the town to a meeting in the church that evening. Immediately Don Mario issued a mandate forbidding a public gathering at a time of such stress. The people began to assemble on the street corners and in front of their houses to discuss the situation. Their talk became loud and animated. Threats were heard. The people were becoming divided. Don Jorge was everywhere, and none could talk so volubly nor gesticulate and expectorate so vehemently as he.

At sundown the people moved toward the *plaza*. Then the concourse drifted slowly into the church. Don Jorge dragged José from the parish house and up to the altar. "You have got to divide them, Padre!" he whispered excitedly. "Your only hope now lies in the formation of your own party to oppose the Alcalde! Talk to them as you never talked before! Say all that you had stored up to say on Judgment Day!"

Again, as José faced his little flock and saw them, bare of feet, scantily clad in their simple cotton and calico, their faces set in deep seriousness, the ludicrous side of the whole situation flashed before him, and he almost laughed aloud at the spectacle which the ancient, decayed town at that moment presented. These primitive folk—they were but children, with all a child's simplicity of nature, its petulance, its immaturity of view, and its sudden and unreasoning acceptance of authority! He turned to the altar and took up a tall brass crucifix. He held it out before him for a moment. Then he called upon the Christ to witness to the truth of what he was about to say.

A hush fell over the assembly. Even Don Mario seemed to become calm after that dramatic spectacle. Then José spoke. He talked long and earnestly. He knew not that such eloquence abode within him. His declamation became more and more impassioned. He opened wide his heart and called upon all present to look fearlessly within. Yes, he had written the book in question. But its publication was unfortunate. Yes, it had expressed his views at that time. But now—ah, now!

He stopped and looked about the church. The shadows were gathering thick, and the smoking kerosene lamps battled vainly with the heavy blackness. In a far corner of the room he saw Carmen and Ana. Rosendo sat stolidly beside them. The sightless babe waved its tiny hands in mute helplessness, while Doña Maria held it closely to her bosom. Carmen's last admonition sang in his ears. He must know—really *know*—that the babe could see! He must know that God was omnipotent! His appeal to the people was not for himself. He cared

not what became of him. But Carmen—and now Ana and the blind babe—and the calm, unimpassioned Doña Maria, the embodiment of all that was greatest in feminine character—and Rosendo, waiting to lay down his life for those he loved! And then, this people, soon, he felt, to be shattered by the shock of war—ah, God above! what could he say that might save them? If they could know, as Carmen did, if they could love and trust as she did, would the hideous spectre of war ever stalk among them? Could the world know, and love, and trust as did this fair child, would it waste itself in useless wars, sink with famine and pestilence, consume with the anguish of fear, and in the end bury its blasted hopes in the dank, reeking tomb? The thought gave wings to his voice, soul to his words. For hours the people sat spellbound.

Then he finished. He raised his hands in benediction. And, while the holy hush remained upon the people, he descended the altar steps, his frame still tremulous with the vehemence of his appeal, and went alone to his house.

CHAPTER 32

DAWN had scarcely reddened in the east when a number of men assembled at José's door.

"You have turned the trick, *amigo*," said Don Jorge, rousing up from his *petate* on the floor beside the priest's bed. "You have won over a few of them, at least."

Jose went out to meet the early callers.

"We come to say, Padre," announced Andres Arellano, the dignified spokesman, "that we have confidence in your words of last night. We suspect Don Mario, even though he has letters from the Bishop. We are your men, and we would keep the war away from Simití."

There were five of them, strong of heart and brawny of arm. "And there will be more, Padre," added Andres, reading the priest's question in his appraising glance.

Thus was the town divided; and while many clung to the Alcalde, partly through fear of offending the higher ecclesiastical authority, and partly because of imagined benefits to be gained, others, and a goodly number, assembled at José's side, and looked to him to lead them in the crisis which all felt to be at hand. As the days passed, the priest's following grew more numerous, until, after the lapse of a week, the town stood fairly divided. Don Jorge announced his intention of remaining in Simití for the present.

From the night of the meeting in the church excitement ran continuously higher. Business was at length suspended; the fishermen forgot their nets; and the limber tongues of the town gossips steadily increased their clatter. Don Mario's store and *patio* assumed the functions of a departmental office. Daily he might be seen laboriously drafting letters of incredible length and wearisome prolixity to acting-Bishop Wenceslas; and nightly he was engaged in long colloquies and whispered conferences with Don Luis and others of his followers and hangers-on. The government arms had been brought up from Bodega Central and stored in an empty warehouse belonging to Don Felipe Alcozer to await further disposition.

But with the arrival of the arms, and of certain letters which Don Mario received from Cartagena, the old town lost its calm of centuries, not to recover it again for many a dreary day. By the time its peace was finally restored, it had received a blow from which it never recovered. And many a familiar face, too, had disappeared forever from its narrow streets.

Meanwhile, José and his followers anxiously awaited the turn of events. It came at length, and in a manner not wholly unexpected. The Alcalde in his voluminous correspondence with Wenceslas had not failed to bring against José every charge which his unduly stimulated brain could imagine. But in particular did he dwell upon the priest's malign influence upon Carmen, whose physical beauty and powers of mind were the marvel of Simití. He hammered upon this with an insistence that could not but at length again attract the thought of the acting-Bishop, who wrote finally to Don Mario, expressing the mildly couched opinion that, now that his attention had been called again to the matter, Carmen should have the benefits of the education and liberal training which a convent would afford.

Don Mario's egotism soared to the sky. The great Bishop was actually being advised by him! *Hombre!* Where would it not end! He would yet remove to a larger town, perhaps Mompox, and, with the support of the great ecclesiastic, stand for election to Congress! He would show the Bishop what mettle he had in him. *Hombre!* And first he would show His Grace how a loyal servant could anticipate his master's wishes. He summoned Fernando, and imperiously bade him bring the girl Carmen at once.

But Fernando returned, saying that Rosendo refused to give up the child. Don Mario then ordered Rosendo's arrest. But Fernando found it impossible to execute the commission. José and Don Jorge stood with Rosendo, and threatened to deal harshly with the constable should he attempt to take Car-

men by force. Fernando then sought to impress upon the Alcalde the danger of arousing public opinion again over the girl.

Don Mario's wrath burst forth like an exploding bomb. He seized his straw hat and his cane, the emblem of his office, and strode to the house of Rosendo. His face grew more deeply purple as he went. At the door of the house he encountered José and Don Jorge.

"Don Mario," began José, before the Alcalde could get his words shaped, "it is useless. Carmen remains with us. We will defend her with our lives. Be advised, Don Mario, for the consequences of thoughtless action may be incalculable!"

"*Caramba!*" bellowed the irate official, "but, cow-face! do you know that His Grace supports me? That I but execute his orders? *Dios arriba!* if you do not at once deliver to me your paramour—"

He got no further. Rosendo, who had been standing just within the door, suddenly pushed José and Don Jorge aside and, stalking out, a tower of flesh, confronted the raging Alcalde. For a moment he gazed down into the pig-eyes of the man. Then, with a quick thrust of his thick arm, he projected his huge fist squarely into Don Mario's bloated face. The Alcalde went down like a shot.

Neither José nor Don Jorge, as they rushed in between Rosendo and his fallen adversary, had any adequate idea of the consequences of the old man's precipitate action. As they assisted the prostrate official to his unsteady feet they knew not that to Rosendo, simple, peace-loving, and great of heart, had fallen the lot to inaugurate hostilities in the terrible anti-clerical war which now for four dismal years was to tear Colombia from end to end, and leave her prostrate and exhausted at last, her sons decimated, her farms and industries ruined, and her neck beneath the heavy heel of a military despot at Bogotá, whose pliant hand would still be guided by the astute brain of Rome.

By the time the startled Alcalde had been set again upon his feet a considerable concourse had gathered at the scene. Many stood in wide-eyed horror at what had just occurred. Others broke into loud and wild talk. The crowd rapidly grew, and in a few minutes the *plaza* was full. Supporters of both sides declaimed and gesticulated vehemently. In the heat of the arguments a blow was struck. Then another. The Alcalde, when he found his tongue, shrilly demanded the arrest of Rosendo and his family, including the priest and Don Jorge. A dozen of his party rushed forward to execute the order. Rosendo had slipped between José and Don Jorge and into his

house. In a trice he emerged with a great *machete*. The people about him fell back. His eyes blazed like live coals, and his breath seemed to issue from his dilating nostrils like clouds of steam. To approach him meant instant death. Don Jorge crept behind him and, gaining the house, collected the terrified women and held them in readiness for flight. Juan, Lázaro, and a number of others surrounded José and faced the angry multitude.

The strain was broken by the frenzied Alcalde, who rushed toward Rosendo. The old man swung his enormous *machete* with a swirl that, had it met the official, would have clean decapitated him. But, fortunately, one of the priest's supporters threw out his foot, and the corpulent Alcalde fell heavily over it and bit the dust. José threw himself upon Rosendo. The old man staggered with the shock and gave way. The priest turned to the excited crowd. Holding up both hands high above his head, he sent out his voice clear and loud.

"Children! In the name of the Church! In the name of the Christ! The blessed Virgin—"

"What know you of the blessed Virgin, priest of Satan?" shouted a rough follower of the Alcalde.

"Aye!" yelled another. "Writer of foul books! Seducer of young girls!"

Julio Gomez stooped and took up a large piece of shale. He threw it with all his force, just as the priest again strove to make his voice heard above the din. It struck José full on the forehead. The jagged stone cut deeply, and the red blood spurted. José fell into the arms of Lázaro and was dragged into the house.

Then Rosendo, with a mad yell, plunged wildly into the crowd. A dozen arms sought to hold him, but in vain. Julio saw the terrifying apparition hurtling down upon him. He turned and fled, but not before the great knife had caught him on its point as it swung down and ripped a deep gash the full length of his naked back.

Then the last vestige of reason fled from the mob, and chaos took the reins. Back and forth through the *plaza*, in front of the church where hung the image of the Prince of Peace, the maddened people surged, fighting like demons, raining blows with clubs, fists, and *machetes*, stabbing with their long, wicked knives, hurling sharp stones, gouging, ripping, yelling, shrieking, calling upon Saints and Virgin to curse their enemies and bless their blows. Over the heads of them all towered the mighty frame of Rosendo. Back before his murderous *machete* fell the terrified combatants. His course among them was that of a cannon ball. Dozens hung upon his arms, his shoul-

ders, or flung themselves about his great legs. His huge body, slippery and reeking, was galvanized into energy incarnate. Sparks seemed to flash from his eyes. His breath turned to livid flame. Behind him, following in the swath which he cut, his supporters crowded, fought and yelled. Don Mario's forces gave way. They cursed, broke, and fled. Then Don Jorge, a man whose mortal strength was more than common, threw himself upon the steaming, frenzied Rosendo and stopped his mad progress.

"Rosendo—*amigo! Caramba!* Listen! They are fleeing to the *bodega* to get the rifles and ammunition! Come—*Dios arriba!* Come!"

Cut, bruised, and dripping blood from a dozen wounds, Rosendo stood for a moment blinking in confusion. A score lay on the ground about him. Whether dead or wounded, he knew not, nor cared. The sight of Don Mario's supporters in full flight fascinated him. He broke into a chuckle. It sounded like the gloating of an imp of Satan. Then the force of Don Jorge's words smote him.

"*Caramba!* They will return with the rifles!" he panted. "What shall we do?"

"Come! We must lose no time!" cried Don Jorge, pulling him toward the house. Those of the priest's other followers who were still whole scattered wildly to their homes and barred their doors. There they searched for knives, *machetes*, razors, any tool or instrument that might be pressed into service as a weapon, and stood guard. One frenzied fellow, the sole possessor of an antiquated shotgun, projected the rusty arm from a hole in the wall of his mud hut and blazed away down the deserted street indiscriminately and without aim.

Within the house Juan and Lázaro were supporting the dazed José, while Doña Maria bathed and bound his wound. Carmen stood gazing upon the scene in bewilderment. The precipitousness of the affair had taken her breath away and driven all thought in mad rout from her mind.

"*Amigos!*" panted Don Jorge, "the church—it is the only place now that is even fairly safe! Doña Maria, do you collect all the food in the house! We know not how long we may be prisoners—"

"But—Don Jorge," interrupted José feebly, "they will attack us even there! Let us flee—"

"Where, *amigo?* To the Guamocó trail? *Caramba!* they would shoot us down in cold blood! *Hombre!* There is no place but the church! That will hold some of them back, at any rate! And none of them, if they get crazed with *anisado!* But it is the only place now! Come!"

"Hombre!" cried Rosendo, starting for the door, "but do you, Juan and Lázaro, follow me with your *machetes*, and we will drive the cowards from the *bodega* and get the rifles ourselves!"

"No, *amigo!* Impossible! By this time they have broken open the boxes and loaded the guns. A shot—and it would be all over with you! But in the church—you have a chance there!"

Don Jorge seized his arm and dragged him out of the house and across the deserted *plaza*. Juan and Lázaro helped Doña Maria gather what food and water remained in the house; and together they hurried out and over to the church. Swinging open the heavy wooden doors, they entered and made them fast again. Then they sank upon the benches and strove to realize their situation.

But Don Jorge suddenly sprang to his feet. "The windows!" he cried.

Juan and Lázaro hurried to them and swung the wooden shutters.

"There is no way of holding them!" cried Juan in dismay.

"Caramba!" muttered Rosendo, seizing a bench and with one blow of his *machete* splitting it clean through, "these will make props to hold them!"

It was the work of but a few minutes to place benches across the thick shutters and secure them with others placed diagonally against them and let into the hard dirt floor. The same was done with the doors. Then the little group huddled together and waited. José heard a sob beside him, and a hand clutched his in the gloom. It was Carmen. In the excitement of the hour he had all but forgotten her. Through his present confusion of thought a great fact loomed: as the girl clung to him she was weeping!

A low rumble drifted to them; a confusion of voices, growing louder; and then a sharp report.

"They are coming, Padre," muttered Rosendo. "And some one has tried his rifle!"

A moment later the ruck poured into the *plaza* and made for Rosendo's house. Don Mario, holding his cane aloft like a sword, was at their head. Raging with disappointment at not finding the fugitives in the house, they threw the furniture and kitchen utensils madly about, punched great holes through the walls, and then rushed pellmell to the parish house next door. A groan escaped José as he watched them through a chink in the shutters. His books and papers! His notes and writings!

But as the howling mob streamed toward the parish house

a wrinkled old crone shrilled at them from across the way and pointed toward the church.

"In there, *amigos!*" she screamed. "I saw them enter! Shoot them—they have hurt my Pedro!"

Back like a huge wave the crowd flowed, and up against the church doors. Don Mario, at the head of his valiant followers, held up his hand for silence. Then, planting himself before the main doors of the church, he loudly voiced his authority.

"In the name of the Government at Bogotá!" he cried pompously, tapping the doors with his light cane. Then he turned quickly. "Fernando," he called, "run to my house and fetch the drum!"

Despite the seriousness of their situation, José smiled at the puppet-show being enacted without.

The Alcalde reiterated his demands with truculent vanity. "Open! In the name of the Government! I am the law!"

Don Jorge groaned aloud. "*Caramba!* if I but had him in here alone!"

Don Mario waited a few moments. Then, as no response came from within, his anger began to soar. "*Caramba!*" he cried, "but you defy the law?"

Angry mutterings rose from the crowd. Some one suggested burning the building. Another advised battering in the doors. A third intimated that shooting them full of holes were better. This idea, once voiced, spread like an infection. The childish people were eager to try the rifles.

"Shoot the doors down! Shoot them down, Don Mario!" yelled the mob.

The Alcalde threw himself heavily up against the doors. "*Caramba!*" he shrilled. "Fools! Demons! Open!—or it will be the worse for you!"

José decided that their silence should no longer exasperate the angry man. He put his mouth to the crevice between the doors.

"Don Mario," he cried, "this is sacred ground! The Host is exposed on the altar. Take your mob away. Disperse, and we will come out. We may settle this trouble amicably, if you will but listen to reason."

The Alcalde jumped up and down in his towering wrath. "Puppy-face!" he screamed, "but I am the law—I am the Government! A curse upon you, priest of Satan! Will you unbar these doors?"

"No!" replied José. "And if you attack us you attack the Church!"

"A curse on the Church! *Amigos! Muchachos!*" he bawled, turning to the mob, "we will batter down the doors!"

The crowd surged forward again. But the props held firm. Again and again the mob hurled itself upon the thick doors. They bent, they sagged, but they held. Don Mario became apoplectic. A torrent of anathemas streamed from his thick lips.

"The side door!" some one shouted, recovering a portion of his scant wit.

"Aye—and the door of the *sacristía!*"

"Try the windows!"

Round the building streamed the crazed mob, without head, without reason, lusting only for the lives of the frightened little band huddled together in the gloom within. José kept an arm about Carmen. Ana bent sobbing over her tiny babe. Don Jorge and Rosendo remained mute and grim. José knew that those two would cast a long reckoning before they died. Juan and Lázaro went from door to window, steadying the props and making sure that they were holding. The tough, hard, tropical wood, though pierced in places by *comjejen* ants, was resisting.

The sun was already high, and the *plaza* had become a furnace. The patience of the mob quickly evaporated in the ardent heat. Don Mario's wits had gone completely. Revenge, mingled with insensate zeal to manifest the authority which he believed his intercourse with Wenceslas had greatly augmented, had driven all rationality from his motives. Flaming anger had unseated his reason. Descending from the platform on which stood the church, he blindly drew up his armed followers and bade them fire upon the church doors.

If Wenceslas, acting-Bishop by the grace of political machination, could have witnessed the stirring drama then in progress in ancient Simití, he would have laughed aloud at the complete fulfillment of his carefully wrought plans. The cunning of the shrewd, experienced politician had never been more clearly manifested than in the carrying out of the little program which he had set for the unwise Alcalde of this almost unknown little town, whereby the hand of Congress should be forced and the inevitable revolt inaugurated. Don Mario had seized the government arms, the deposition of which in Simití in his care had constituted him more than ever the representative of federal authority. But, in his wild zeal, he had fallen into the trap which Wenceslas had carefully arranged for him, and now was engaged in a mad attack upon the Church itself, upon ecclesiastical authority as vested in the priest José. How could Wenceslas interpret this but as an anticlerical uprising? There remained but the final scene. And while the soft-headed dupes and maniacal supporters of Don Mario were

hurling bullets into the thick doors of the old church in Simití, Wenceslas sat musing in his comfortable study in the cathedral of Cartagena, waiting with what patience he could command for further reports from Don Mario, whose last letter had informed him that the arrest of the priest José and his unfortunate victim, Carmen, was only a few hours off.

When the first shots rang out, and the bullets ploughed into the hard wood of the heavy doors, José's heart sank, and he gave himself up as lost. Lázaro and Juan cowered upon the floor. Carmen crept close to José, as he sat limply upon a bench, and put her arms about him.

"Padre dear," she whispered, "it isn't true—it isn't true! They don't really want to kill us! They don't—really! Their thoughts have only the minus sign!"

The priest clasped her to his breast. The recriminating thought flashed over him that he alone was the cause of this. He had sacrificed them all—none but he was to blame. Ah, God above! if he could only offer himself to satiate the mob's lust, and save these innocent ones! Lurid, condemnatory thoughts burned through his brain like molten iron. He rose hastily and rushed to the door. Rosendo and Don Jorge seized him as he was about to lift a prop.

"What do you mean, Padre?" they exclaimed.

"I am going out, friends—I shall give myself to them for you all. It is the only way. I am the one they seek. Let them have me, if they will spare you!"

But the firing had ceased, and Don Mario was approaching the door. José bent down and called to him. "Myself for the others, Don Mario!" he cried. "But promise to spare them—but give me your word—and I will yield myself to arrest!"

"*Caramba*, fool priest!" shouted the Alcalde in derision. "It is not you that the good Bishop wants, but the girl! I have his letters demanding that I send her to him! If you will come out, you shall not be hurt. Only, Rosendo must stand trial for the harm he did in the fight this morning; and the girl must go to Cartagena. As for the rest of you, you will be free. Are the terms not reasonable? Give me your answer in five minutes."

José turned to the little band. There was awful determination in his voice. "Juan and Lázaro," he said, "we will open a window quickly in the rear of the church and let you out. It is not right that you should die with us. And Don Jorge, too—"

"Stop there, *amigo!*" interrupted the latter in a voice as cold as steel. "My life has not the value of a white heron. Can I do better than give it for a cause that I know to be right? Nay, man, I remain with you. Let the lads go, if they will—"

Lázaro forced himself between Don Jorge and the priest. "Padre," he said quietly, "to you I owe what I am. I remain here."

José looked through the gloom at Juan. The boy's eyes were fixed on Carmen. He turned and gazed for a moment at a window, as if hesitating between two decisions. Then he shook his head slowly. "Padre," he said, though his voice trembled, "I, too, remain."

The Alcalde received his answer with a burst of inarticulate rage. He rushed back to his followers with his arms waving wildly. "Shoot!" he screamed. "Shoot! Pierce the doors! Batter them down! *Compadres,* get the poles and burst in the shutters. *Caramba!* it is the Government they are defying!"

A volley from the rifles followed his words. The thick doors shook under the blast. A bullet pierced the wall and whizzed past Carmen. José seized the girl and drew her down under a bench. The startled bats among the roof beams fluttered wildly about through the heavy gloom. Frightened rats scurried around the altar. The rusty bell in the tower cried out as if in protest against the sacrilege. Juan burst into tears and crept beneath a bench.

"Padre," said Rosendo, "it is only a question of time when the doors will fall. See—that bullet went clean through! *Bien,* let us place the women back of the altar, while we men stand here at one side of the doors, so that when they fall we may dash out and cut our way through the crowd. If we throw ourselves suddenly upon them, we may snatch away a rifle or two. Then Don Jorge and I, with the lads here, may drive them back—perhaps beat them! But my first blow shall be for Don Mario! I vow here that, if I escape this place, he shall not live another hour!"

"Better so, Rosendo, than that they should take us alive. But—Carmen? Do we leave her to fall into Don Mario's hands?"

Rosendo's voice, low and cold, froze the marrow in the priest's bones. "Padre, she will not fall into the Alcalde's hands."

"God above! Rosendo, do you—"

A piercing cry checked him. *"Santa Virgen! Padre—!"* Lázaro had collapsed upon the floor. Rosendo and José hurried to him.

"Padre!" The man's breath came in gasps. "Padre—I confess—pray for me. It struck me—here!" He struggled to lay a hand upon his bleeding breast.

"To the altar, *amigos!"* cried Don Jorge, ducking his head as a bullet sang close to it.

Seizing the expiring Lázaro, they hurriedly dragged him down the aisle and took refuge back of the brick altar. The bullets, now piercing the walls of the church with ease, whizzed about them. One struck the pendant figure of the Christ, and it fell crashing to the floor. Rosendo stood in horror, as if he expected a miracle to follow this act of sacrilege.

"Oh, God!" prayed José, "only Thy hand can save us!"

"He will save us, Padre—He will!" cried Carmen, creeping closer to him through the darkness. "God is everywhere, and right here!"

"Padre," said Don Jorge hurriedly, "the Host—is it on the altar?"

"Yes—why?" replied the priest.

"Then, when the doors fall, do you stand in front of the altar, holding it aloft and calling on the people to stand back, lest the hand of God strike them!"

José hesitated not. "It is a chance—yes, a bare chance. They will stop before it—or they will kill me! But I will do it!"

"Padre! You shall not—Padre! Then I shall stand with you!" Carmen's voice broke clear and piercing through the din. José struggled to free himself from her.

"*Na*, Padre," interposed Rosendo, "it may be better so! Let her stand with you! But—*Caramba!* Make haste!"

The clamor without increased. Heavy poles and billets of wood had been fetched, and blow after blow now fell upon every shutter and door. The sharp spitting of the rifles tore the air, and bullets crashed through the walls and windows. In the heavy shadows back of the altar Rosendo and Don Jorge crouched over the sobbing women. Lázaro lay very still. José knew as he stretched out a hand through the darkness and touched the cold face that the faithful spirit had fled. How soon his own would follow he knew not, nor cared. Keeping close to the floor, he crept out and around to the front of the altar. Reaching up, he grasped the Sacred Host, and then stood upright, holding it out before him. Carmen rose by his side and took his hand. Together in the gloom they waited.

CHAPTER 33

"PADRE! Padre! are you alive?"

Rosendo's hoarse whisper drifted across the silence like a wraith. He crept out and along the floor, scarce daring to look up. Through the darkness his straining eyes caught the outlines of the two figures standing like statues before the altar.

"Loado sea Dios!" he cried, and his voice broke with a sob. "But, Padre, they have stopped—what has happened?"

"I know not, *amigo.* Be patient. We are in the hands of God—"

"Padre—listen!" Carmen darted from the altar and ran to the door. "Padre!" she called back. "Come! Some one is speaking English!"

José and Rosendo hurried to the door. All was quiet without, but for an animated conversation between Don Mario and some strangers who had evidently just arrived upon the scene. One of the latter was speaking with the Alcalde in excellent Spanish. Another, evidently unacquainted with the language, made frequent interruptions in the English tongue. José's heart beat wildly.

"Say, Reed," said the voice in English, "tell the parchment-faced old buzzard that we appreciate the little comedy he has staged for us. Tell him it is bully-bueno, but he must not overdo it. We are plum done up, and want a few days of rest."

"What says the señor, *amigo?"* asked Don Mario, with his utmost suavity and unction of manner.

"He says," returned the other in Spanish, "that he is delighted with the firmness which you display in the administration of your office, and that he trusts the bandits within the church may be speedily executed."

"Bandits!" ejaculated Don Mario. "Just so, *amigo!* They are those who defy the Government as represented by myself!" He straightened up and threw out his chest with such an exhibition of importance that the strangers with difficulty kept their faces straight.

Carmen and José looked at each other in amazement during this colloquy.

"Padre!" exclaimed the girl. "Do all who speak English tell such lies?"

"Ah!" murmured the one addressed as Reed, directing himself to the Alcalde, "how dared they! But, señor, my friend and I have come to your beautiful city on business of the ut-

most importance, in which you doubtless will share largely. I would suggest," looking with amusement at the array of armed men about him, "that your prisoners are in no immediate likelihood of escaping, and you might leave them under close guard while we discuss our business. A—a—we hear reports, señor, that there is likely to be trouble in the country, and we are desirous of getting out as soon as possible."

"Cierto! Cierto, señores!" exclaimed Don Mario, bowing low. "It shall be as you say." Turning to the gaping people, he selected several to do guard duty, dismissed the others, and then bade the strangers follow him to his house, which, he declared vehemently, was theirs as long as they might honor him with their distinguished presence.

The sudden turn of events left the little group within the church in a maze of bewilderment. They drew together in the center of the room and talked in low whispers until the sun dropped behind the hills and night drifted through the quiet streets. Late that evening came a tapping at the rear door of the church, and a voice called softly to the priest. José roused out of his gloomy revery and hastened to answer it.

"It is Fernando, Padre. I am on guard; but no one must know that I talk with you. But—Padre, if you open the door and escape, I will not see you. I am sorry, Padre, but it could not be helped. Don Mario has us all frightened, for the Bishop—"

"True, *amigo,*" returned José; "but the strangers who arrived this afternoon—who are they, and whence?"

"Two *Americanos,* Padre, and miners."

José studied a moment. "Fernando—you would aid me? *Bien,* get word to the stranger who speaks both English and Spanish. Bring him here, secretly, and stand guard yourself while I talk with him."

"Gladly, Padre," returned the penitent fellow, as he hastened quietly away.

An hour later José was again roused by Fernando tapping on the door.

"Open, Padre. Fear not; only the *Americano* will enter. Don Mario does not know."

José lifted the prop and swung the door open. Rosendo stood with uplifted *machete.* A man entered from the blackness without. José quickly closed the door, and then addressed him in English.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the stranger in a mellow voice. "I had no idea I should find any one in this God-forsaken town who could speak real United States!"

José drew him into the *sacristía.* Neither man could see the other in the dense blackness.

"Tell me, friend," began José, "who you are, and where you come from."

"Reed—Charles Reed—New York—mining engineer—down here to examine the so-called mines of the Molino Company, now gasping its last while awaiting our report. Arrived this afternoon from Badillo with my partner, fellow named Harris. But—great heavens, man! you certainly were in a stew when we appeared! And why don't you escape now?"

"Escape, friend? Where? Even if we passed the guard, where would we go? There are two women, a girl, and a babe with us. We have little food and no money. Should we gain the Boque or Guamocó trail, we would be pursued and shot down. There is a chance here—none in flight!

"But now, Mr. Reed," continued José earnestly, "will you get word from me to the Bishop in Cartagena that our church has been attacked—that its priest is besieged by the Alcalde, and his life in jeopardy?"

"Assuredly—but how?"

"You have money?" said José, speaking rapidly. "Good. Your *bogas* have not returned to Badillo?"

"No, they are staying here for the big show. Execution of the traitors, you know."

"Then, friend, send them at dawn to Bodega Central. Let them take a message to be sent by the telegraph from that place. Tell the Bishop—"

"Sure!" interrupted the other. "Leave it to me. I'll fix up a message that will bring him by return boat! I've been talking with the Honorable Alcalde and I've got his exact number. Say, he certainly is the biggest damn—beg pardon; I mean, the biggest numbskull I have ever run across—and that's saying considerable for a mining man!"

"Go, friend!" said José, making no other reply to the man's words. "Go quickly—and use what influence you have with the Alcalde to save us. We have women here—and a young girl!" He found the American's hand and led him out into the night.

* * * * * *

Wenceslas Ortiz stood before the Departmental Governor. His face was deeply serious, and his demeanor expressed the utmost gravity. In his hand he held a despatch. The Governor sat at his desk, nervously fumbling a pen.

"Bien, Señor," said Wenceslas quietly, "do you act—or shall I take it to His Excellency, the President?"

The Governor moved uneasily in his chair. *"Caramba!"* he blurted out. "The report is too meager! And yet, I cannot see but that the Alcalde acted wholly within his rights!"

"Your Excellency, he seizes government arms—he attacks the church—he attempts to destroy the life of its priest. Nominally acting for the Government; at heart, anticlerical. Is it not evident? Will the Government clear itself now of the suspicion which this has aroused?"

"But the priest—did you not say only last week that he himself had published a book violently anticlerical in tone?"

"Señor, we will not discuss the matter further," said Wenceslas, moving toward the door. "Your final decision—you will send troops to Simití, or no?"

"Certainly not! The evidence warrants no interference from me!"

Wenceslas courteously bowed himself out. Once beyond the door, he breathed a great sigh of relief. *"Santa Virgen!"* he muttered, "but I took a chance! Had he yielded and sent troops, all would have been spoiled. Now for Bogotá!"

He entered his carriage and was driven hurriedly to his *sanctum*. There he despatched a long message to the President of the Republic. At noon he had a reply. He mused over it for the space of an hour. Then he framed another despatch. "Your Excellency," it read, "the Church supports the Administration."

Late that evening a second message from Bogotá was put into his hand. He tore it open and read, "The Hercules ordered to Simití."

"Ah," he sighed, sinking into his chair. "At last! The President interferes! And now a wire to Ames. And—*Caramba*, yes! A message to the captain of the Hercules to bring me that girl!"

* * * * * *

"Well, old man, I've done all I could to stave off the blundering idiot; but I guess you are in for it! The jig is up, I'm thinking!"

It was Reed talking. Simití again slept, while the American and José in the *sacristía* talked long and earnestly. Fernando kept guard at the door. The other prisoners lay wrapped in slumber.

"Your message went down the river two days ago," continued Reed. "And, believe me! since then I've racked my dusty brain for topics to keep the Alcalde occupied and forgetful of you. But I'm dryer than a desert now; and he vows that to-morrow you and your friends will be dragged out of this old shack by your necks, and then shot."

The two days had been filled with exquisite torture for José. Only the presence of Carmen restrained him from rushing out and ending it all. Her faith had been his constant marvel.

Every hour, every moment, she knew only the immanence of her God; whereas he, obedient to the undulating Rincón character-curve, expressed the mutability of his faith in hourly alternations of optimism and black despair. After periods of exalted hope, stimulated by the girl's sublime confidence, there would come the inevitable backward rush of all the chilling fear, despondency, and false thought which he had just expelled in vain, and he would be left again floundering helplessly in the dismal labyrinth of terrifying doubts.

The quiet which enwrapped them during these days of imprisonment; the gloom-shrouded church; the awed hush that lay upon them in the presence of the dead Lázaro, stimulated the feeble and sensitive spirit of the priest to an unwonted degree of introspection, and he sat for hours gazing blankly into the ghastly emptiness of his past.

He saw how at the first, when Carmen entered his life with the stimulus of her buoyant faith, there had seemed to follow an emptying of self, a quick clearing of his mentality, and a replacement of much of the morbid thought, which clung limpet-like to his mentality, by new and wonderfully illuminating ideas. For a while he had seemed to be on the road to salvation; he felt that he had touched the robe of the Christ, and heavenly virtue had entered into his being.

But then the shadows began to gather once more. He did not cling to the new truths and spiritual ideas tenaciously enough to work them out in demonstration. He had proved shallow soil, whereon the seed had fallen, only to be choked by the weeds which grew apace therein. The troubles which clustered thick about him after his first few months in Simití had seemed to hamper his freer limbs, and check his upward progress. Constant conflict with Diego, with Don Mario, and Wenceslas; the pressure from his mother and his uncle, had kept him looking, now at evil, now at good, giving life and power to each in turn, and wrestling incessantly with the false concepts which his own mentality kept ever alive. Worrying himself free from one set of human beliefs, he fell again into the meshes of others. Though he thought he knew the truth—though he saw it lived and demonstrated by Carmen—he had yet been afraid to throw himself unreservedly upon his convictions. And so he daily paid the dire penalty which error failed not to exact.

But Carmen, the object of by far the greater part of all his anxious thought, had moved as if in response to a beckoning hand that remained invisible to him. Each day she had grown more beautiful. And each day, too, she had seemed to draw farther away from him, as she rose steadily out of the limited

encompassment in which they dwelt. Not by conscious design did she appear to separate from him, but inevitably, because of his own narrow capacity for true spiritual intercourse with such a soul as hers. He shared her ideals; he had sought in his way to attain them; he had striven, too, to comprehend her spirit, which in his heart he knew to be a bright reflection of the infinite Spirit which is God. But as the years passed he had found his efforts to be like her more and more clumsy and blundering, and his responses to her spiritual demands less and less vigorous. At times he seemed to catch glimpses of her soul that awed him. At others he would feel himself half inclined to share the people's belief that she was possessed of powers occult. And then he would sink into despair of ever understanding the girl—for he knew that to do so he must be like her, even as to understand God we must become like Him.

After her fourteenth birthday José found himself rapidly ceasing to regard Carmen as a mere child. Not that she did not still often seem delightfully immature, when her spirits would flow wildly, and she would draw him into the frolics which had yielded her such extravagant joy in former days; but that the growth of knowledge and the rapid development of her thought had seemed to bring to her a deepening sense of responsibility, a growing impression of maturity, and an increasing regard for the meaning of life and her part in it. She had ceased to insist that she would never leave Simití. And José often thought of late, as he watched her, that he detected signs of irksomeness at the limitations which her environment imposed upon her. But, if so, these were never openly expressed; nor did her manner ever change toward her foster-parents, or toward the simple and uncomprehending folk of her native town.

From the first, José had constituted himself her teacher, guide, and protector. And she had joyously accepted him. His soured and rebellious nature had been no barrier to her great love, which had twined about his heart like ivy around a crumbling tower. And his love for the child had swelled like a torrent, fed hourly by countless uncharted streams. He had watched over her like a father; he had rejoiced to see her bloom into a beauty as rich and luxuriant as the tropical foliage; he had gazed for hours into the unsearchable abyss of her black eyes and read there, in ecstasy, a wondrous response to his love; and when, but a few short days ago, she had again intimated a future union, a union upon which, even as a child, she had insisted, yet one which he knew—had always known—utterly, extravagantly impossible—he had, nevertheless, seized upon the thought with a joy that was passionate, desperate—

and had then flung it from him with a cry of agony. It was not the disparity of ages; it was not the girl's present immaturity. In less than a year she would have attained the marriageable age of these Latin countries. But he could wait two, three, aye, ten years for such a divine gift! No; the shadow which lay upon his life was cast by the huge presence of the master whose chains he wore, the iron links of which, galling his soul, he knew to be unbreakable. And, as he sat in the gloom of the decayed old church where he was now a prisoner, the thought that his situation but symbolized an imprisonment in bonds eternal roused him to a half-frenzied resolve to destroy himself.

"Padre dear," the girl had whispered to him that night, just before the American came again with his disquieting report, "Love will open the door—Love will set us free. We are not afraid. Remember, Paul thanked God for freedom even while he sat in chains. And I am just as thankful as he."

José knew as he kissed her tenderly and bade her go to her place of rest on the bench beside Doña Maria that death stood between her and the stained hand of Wenceslas Ortiz.

As morning reddened in the eastern sky Don Mario, surrounded by an armed guard and preceded by his secretary, who beat lustily upon a small drum, marched pompously down the main street and across the *plaza* to the church. Holding his cane aloft he ascended the steps of the platform and again loudly demanded the surrender of the prisoners within.

"On what terms, Don Mario?" asked José.

"The same," reiterated the Alcalde vigorously.

José sighed. "Then we will die, Don Mario," he replied sadly, moving away from the door and leading his little band of harried followers to the rear of the altar.

The Alcalde quickly descended the steps and shouted numerous orders. Several of his men hurried off in various directions, while those remaining at once opened fire upon the church. In a few moments the firing was increased, and the entire attack was concentrated upon the front doors.

The din without became horrible. Shouts and curses filled the morning air. But it was evident to José that his besiegers were meeting with no opposition from his own supporters in the fight of two days before. The sight of the deadly rifles in the hands of Don Mario's party had quickly quenched their loyalty to José, and led them basely to abandon him and his companions to their fate.

After a few minutes of vigorous assault the attack abruptly ceased, and José was called again to the door.

"It's Reed," came the American's voice. He spoke in

English. "I've persuaded the old carrion to let me have a moment's pow-wow with you. Say, give the old buzzard what he wants. Otherwise it's sure death for you all. I've argued myself sick with him, but he's as set as concrete. I'll do what I can for you if you come out; but he's going to have the girl, whether or no. Seems that the Bishop of Cartagena wants her; and the old crow here is playing politics with him."

"Yes, old man," chimed in another voice, which José knew to be that of Harris. "You know these fellows are hell on politics."

"Shut up, Harris!" growled Reed. Then to José, "What'll I tell the old duffer?"

"Lord Harry!" ejaculated Harris, "if I had a couple of Mausers I could put these ancient Springfields on the bum in a hurry!"

"Tell him, friend, that we are prepared to die," replied José drearily, as he turned back into the gloom and took Carmen's hand.

The final assault began, and José knew that it was only a question of minutes when the trembling doors would fall. He crouched with his companions behind the altar, awaiting the inevitable. Carmen held his hand tightly.

"Love will save us, Padre," she whispered. "Love them! Love them, Padre! They don't know what is using them—and it has no power! God is here—is everywhere! Love will save us!"

Rosendo bent over and whispered to Don Jorge, "When the doors fall and the men rush in, stand you here with me! When they reach the altar we will throw ourselves upon them, I first, you following, while Juan will bring Carmen and try to protect her. With our *machetes* we will cut our way out. If we find that it is hopeless—then give me Carmen!"

A moment later, as with a loud wail, the two front doors burst asunder and fell crashing to the floor. A flood of golden sunlight poured into the dark room. In its yellow wake rushed the mob, with exultant yells. Rosendo rose quickly and placed himself at the head of his little band.

But, ere the first of the frenzied besiegers had crossed the threshold of the church, a loud cry arose in the *plaza.*

"The soldiers! *Dios arriba!* The soldiers!"

Down the main thoroughfare came a volley of shots. Don Mario, half way through the church door, froze in his tracks. Those of his followers who had entered, turned quickly and made pellmell for the exit. Their startled gaze met a company of federal troops rushing down the street, firing as they came. Don Mario strained after his flying wits.

"Close the doors!" he yelled. But the doors were prone upon the floor, and could not be replaced. Then he and his men scrambled out and rushed around to one side of the building. As the soldiers came running up, the Alcalde's followers fired point blank into their faces, then dropped their guns and fled precipitately.

It was all over in a trice. Within an hour staid old Simiti lay in the grip of martial law, with its once overweening Alcalde, now a meek and frightened prisoner, arraigned before Captain Morales, holding court in the shabby town hall.

But the court-martial was wholly perfunctory. Though none there but himself knew it, the captain had come with the disposal of the unfortunate Don Mario prearranged. A perfunctory hearing of witnesses, which but increased his approval of his orders, and he pronounced sentence upon the former Alcalde, and closed the case.

"Attack upon the church—Assassination of the man Lázaro —Firing upon federal soldiers—To be shot at sunset, señor," he concluded solemnly.

Don Mario sank to the floor in terror. *"Caramba! caramba!"* he howled. "But I had letters from the Bishop! I was ordered by him to do it!"

"Bien, señor," replied the captain, whose heart was not wholly devoid of pity, "produce your letters."

"Dios arriba! I burned them! He said I should! I obeyed him! *Caramba!* I am lost—lost!"

"Señor Capitán," interposed José, "may I plead for the man? He is—"

"There, Padre," returned the captain, holding up a hand, "it is useless. Doubtless this has been brought about by motives which you do not understand. It is unfortunate—but inevitable. You have a *cárcel* here? *Bien,"* addressing his lieutenant, "remove the prisoner to it, and at sunset let the sentence be carried out."

Don Mario, screaming with fear, was dragged from the room.

"And now, señores," continued the captain calmly, as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, "I appoint Don Fernando, former secretary, as temporary Alcalde, until such time as the Governor may fill the office permanently. And," he continued, looking about the room with a heavy scowl, while the timid people shrank against the wall, "as for those misguided ones who took part with Don Mario in this anticlerical uprising—his fate will serve, I think, as a warning!"

A hush of horror lay upon the stunned people as they filed slowly out of the room.

"Bien," added the captain, addressing Fernando, "quarters for my men, and rations. We return to the Hercules at daybreak. And let all arms and ammunition be collected. Every house must be searched. And we shall want *peones* to carry it to the river."

José turned away, sick with the horror of it all. A soldier approached him with a message from Don Mario. The condemned man was asking for the last rites. Faint and trembling, the priest accompanied the messenger to the jail.

"Padre! *Dios arriba!"* wailed the terrified and bewildered Don Mario. "It was a mistake! Don Wenceslas—"

"Yes, I understand, Don Mario," interrupted José, tenderly taking the man's hand. "He told you to do it."

"Yes, Padre," sobbed the unfortunate victim. "He said that I would be rich—that I would be elected to Congress—ah, the traitor! And, Padre—I burned his letters because it was his wish! Ah, *Santa Virgen!"* He put his head on the priest's shoulder and wept violently.

José's heart was wrung; but he was powerless to aid the man. And yet, as he dwelt momentarily on his own sorrows, he almost envied the fate which had overtaken the misguided Don Mario.

The lieutenant entered. *"Señor Padre,"* he said, "the sun is low. In a quarter of an hour—"

Don Mario sank to the ground and clasped the priest's knees. José held up his hand, and the lieutenant, bowing courteously, withdrew. The priest knelt beside the cowering prisoner.

"Don Mario," he said gently, holding the man's hand, "confess all to me. It may be the means of saving other lives—and then you will have expiated your own crimes."

"Padre," moaned the stricken man, rocking back and forth, his head buried in his hands and tears streaming through his fingers, "Padre, you will forgive—?"

"Aye, Don Mario, everything. And the Christ forgives. Your sins are remitted. But remove now the last burden from your soul—the guilty knowledge of the part Don Wenceslas has had in the disaster which has come upon Simití. Tell it all, friend, for you may save many precious lives thereby."

The fallen Alcalde roused himself by a mighty effort. Forgetting for the moment his own dire predicament, he opened his heart. José sat before him in wide-mouthed astonishment. Don Mario's confession brought a revelation that left him cold. The lieutenant entered again.

"One moment," said José. Then, to Don Mario: "And Carmen?"

Don Mario leaned close to the priest and whispered low.

"No, she is not Diego's child! And, Padre, take her away, at once! But out of the country! There is not an inch of ground in all Colombia now where she would be safe from Don Wenceslas!"

José's head sank upon his breast. Then he again took Don Mario's hand.

"Friend," he said gravely, "rest assured, what you have told me saves at least one life, and removes the sin with which your own was stained. And now," rising and turning to the waiting lieutenant, "we are ready."

Ora pro nobis! Ora pro nobis! Santa Virgen, San Salvador, ora pro nobis!

A few minutes later a sharp report echoed through the Simití valley and startled the herons that were seeking their night's rest on the wooded isle. Then José de Rincón, alone, and with a heart of lead, moved slowly down through the dreary village and crossed the deserted *plaza* to his lowly abode.

CHAPTER 34

THE low-hung moon, shrouded in heavy vapor, threw an eldritch shimmer upon the little group that silently bore the body of the martyred Lázaro from the old church late that night to the dreary cemetery on the hill. José took but a reluctant part in the proceedings. He would even have avoided this last service to his faithful friend if he could. It seemed to him as he stumbled along the stony road behind the body which Rosendo and Don Jorge carried that his human endurance had been strained so far beyond the elastic limit that there could now be no rebound. Every thought that touched his sore mind made it bleed anew, for every thought that he accepted was acrid, rasping, oppressive. The sheer weight of foreboding, of wild apprehension, of paralyzing fear, crushed him, until his shoulders bent low as he walked. How, lest he perform a miracle, could he hope to extricate himself and his loved ones from the meshes of the net, far-cast, but with unerring aim, which had fallen upon them?

As he passed the town hall he saw through the open door the captain's cot, and a guard standing motionless beside it. The captain had elected to remain there for the night, while his men found a prickly hospitality among the cowering townsfolk. José knew now that the hand which Don Mario had dealt himself in the game inaugurated by Wenceslas had been from a stacked deck. He knew that the President of the Re-

public had ordered Morales to this inoffensive little town to quell an alleged anticlerical uprising, and that the execution of the misguided Alcalde had been determined long before the Hercules had got under way. He could see that it was necessary for the Government to sacrifice its agent in the person of the Alcalde, in order to prove its own loyalty to the Church. And in return therefor he knew it would expect, not without reason, the coöperation of the Church in case the President's interference in the province of Bolivar should precipitate a general revolt.

But what had been determined upon as his own fate? He had not the semblance of an idea. From the confession of the ruined Alcalde he now knew that Don Mario had been poisoned against him from the beginning; that even the letters of introduction which Wenceslas had given him to the Alcalde contained the charge of his having accomplished the ruin of the girl Maria in Cartagena, and of his previous incarceration in the monastery of Palazzola. And Don Mario had confessed in his last moments that Wenceslas had sought to work through him and José in the hope that the location of the famous mine, La Libertad, might be revealed. Don Mario had been instructed to get what he could out of this scion of Rincón; and only his own greed and cupidity had caused him to play fast and loose with both sides until, falling before the allurements which Wenceslas held out, he had rushed madly into his own destruction. José realized that so far he himself had proved extremely useful to Wenceslas—but had his usefulness ended? At these thoughts his soul momentarily suffused with the pride of the old and hectoring Rincón stock and rose, instinct with revolt—but only to sink again in helpless resignation, while the shadow of despair rolled in and quenched his feeble determination.

Rosendo and Don Jorge placed the body in one of the vacant vaults and filled the entrance with some loose bricks. Then they stood back expectantly. It was now the priest's turn. He had a part to perform, out there on the bleak hilltop in the ghostly light. But José remained motionless and silent, his head sunk upon his breast.

Then Rosendo, waxing troubled, spoke in gentle admonition. "He would expect it, you know, Padre."

José turned away from the lonely vault. Bitter tears coursed down his cheeks, and his voice broke. He laid his head on Rosendo's stalwart shoulder and wept aloud.

The sickly, greenish cast of the moonlight silhouetted the figures of the three men in grotesque shapes against the cemetery wall and the crumbling tombs. The morose call of a toucan floated weirdly upon the heavy air. The faint wail of

the frogs in the shallow waters below rose like the despairing sighs of lost souls.

Rosendo wound his long arm about the sorrowing priest. Don Jorge's muscles knotted, and a muttered imprecation rose from his tight lips. Strangely had the shift and coil of the human mind thrown together these three men, so different in character, yet standing now in united protest against the misery which men heap upon their fellow-men in the name of Christ. José, the apostate agent of Holy Church, his hands bound, and his heart bursting with yearning toward his fellow-men; Rosendo, simple-minded and faithful, chained to the Church by heredity and association, yet ashamed of its abuses and lusts; Don Jorge, fierce in his denunciation of the political and religious sham and hypocrisy which he saw masking behind the cloak of imperial religion.

"I have nothing to say, friends," moaned José, raising his head; "nothing that would not still further reveal my own miserable weakness and the despicable falsity of the Church. If the Church had followed the Christ, it would have taught me to do likewise; and I should now call to Lázaro and bid him come forth, instead of shamefully confessing my impotency and utter lack of spirituality, even while I pose as an *Alter Christus*."

"You—you will leave a blessing with him before we go, Padre?" queried the anxious Rosendo, clinging still to the frayed edge of his fathers' faith.

"My blessing, Rosendo," replied José sadly, "would do no good. He lies there because we have utterly forgotten what the Master came to teach. He lies there because of our false, undemonstrable, mortal beliefs. Oh, that the Church, instead of wasting time murmuring futile prayers over dead bodies, had striven to learn to do the deeds which the Christ said we should all do if we but kept his commandments!"

"But, Padre, you will say Masses for him?" pursued Rosendo.

"Masses? No, I can not—now. I would not take his or your money to give to the Church to get his soul out of an imagined purgatory which the Church long ago invented for the purpose of enriching herself materially—for, alas! after spiritual riches she has had little hankering."

"To pay God to get His own children out of the flames, eh?" suggested Don Jorge. "It is what I have always said, the religion of the Church is a *religion de dinero*. If there ever was a God, either He is still laughing Himself sick at our follies—or else He has wept Himself to death over them! Jesus Christ taught no such stuff!"

"Friend," said José solemnly, turning to Don Jorge, "I long

since learned what the whole world must learn some time, that the Church stands to-day, not as the bride of the Christ, but as the incarnation of the human mind, as error opposed to Truth. It is the embodiment of 'Who shall be greatest?' It is one of the various phenomena of the human mentality; and its adherents are the victims of authoritative falsehood. Its Mass and countless other ceremonies differ in no essential respect from ancient pagan worship. Of spirituality it has none. And so it can do none of the works of the Master. Its corrupting faith is foully materialistic. It has been weighed and found wanting. And as the human mind expands, the incoming light must drive out the black beliefs and deeds of Holy Church, else the oncoming centuries will have no place for it."

"I believe you!" ejaculated Don Jorge. "But why do you still remain a priest? *Hombre!* I knew when I saw you on the river boat that you were none. But," his voice dropping to a whisper, "there is a soldier in the road below. It would be well to leave. He might think we were here to plot."

When the soldier had passed, they quietly left the gloomy cemetery and made their way quickly back through the straggling moonlight to Rosendo's house. Doña Maria, with characteristic quietude, was preparing for the duties of the approaching day. Carmen lay asleep. José went to her bedside and bent over her, wondering. What were the events of the past few days in her sight? How did she interpret them? Was her faith still unshaken? What did Lázaro's death and the execution of Don Mario mean to her? Did she, as he had done, look upon them as real events in a real world, created and governed by a good God? Or did she still hold such things to be the unreal phenomena of the human mentality?—unreal, because opposed to God, and without the infinite principle. As for himself, how had the current of his life been diverted by this rare child! What had she not sought to teach him by her simple faith, her unshaken trust in the immanence of good! True, as a pure reflection of good she had seemed to be the means of stirring up tremendous evil. But had he not seen the evil eventually consume itself, leaving her unscathed? And yet, would this continue? He himself had always conceded to the forces of evil as great power as to those of good—nay, even greater. And even now as he stood looking at her, wrapped in peaceful slumber, his strained sight caught no gleam of hope, no light flashing through the heavy clouds of misfortune that lowered above her. He turned away with an anxious sigh.

"Padre," said the gentle Doña Maria, "the two *Americanos*—"

"Ah, yes," interrupted José, suddenly remembering that he

had sent word to them to use his house while they remained in the town. "They had escaped my thought. *Bien,* they are—?"

"They brought their baggage to your house an hour ago and set up their beds in your living room. They will be asleep by now."

"Good," he replied, a wistful sense of gratitude stealing over him at the reassuring thought of their presence. *"Bien,* we will not disturb them."

Summoning Rosendo and Don Jorge, the three men sought the lake's edge. There, seated on the loose shales, they wrestled with their problem until dawn spread her filmy veil over the shimmering stars.

* * * * * *

Long before sun-up the soldiers and the *peones,* whom Captain Morales had impressed, were busy gathering the commandeered rifles and carrying them down to the gunboat Hercules, waiting at the mouth of the Boque river, some six or eight miles distant, and over a wild trail. The townsfolk, thoroughly frightened, hugged the shelter of their homes, and left the streets to the troops. Though they detested the soldiers, yet none would lightly risk a blow from the heavy hand of Morales, whose authority on a punitive expedition of this sort was unlimited. The summary execution of the Alcalde had stricken them with horror, and left an impression which never would be erased from their memories.

Immediately after the early *desayuno* the captain appeared at Rosendo's door. He had come to say farewell to the priest. All of the soldiers had disappeared down the trail, with the exception of the two who formed the captain's small personal escort.

"Conque, adios, Señor Padre," he called cheerily, as he approached. José was sitting at table with Rosendo's family and Don Jorge. Instinctively he rose hastily, and seizing Carmen, thrust her into the adjoining bedroom and closed the door. Then he went out to face the captain.

"Much excitement for your little *pueblo,* no?" exclaimed the captain with a bluff laugh as he grasped José's hand. "But a lesson like this will last a century. I rejoice that I found it unnecessary to burn the town."

José trembled as he replied. *"Señor Capitán,* I, too, rejoice. But—the state of the country—what may we expect?"

The captain laughed again. *"Caramba, Padre mío!* who can say? There is much talk, many angry looks, much gesturing and waving of hands. Congress still sits. The President sees fit to send me here, without order from the Departmental

Governor. *Hombre!* what will follow? *Quien sabe?"* He shrugged his shoulders with that expressive Latin gesture which indicates complete irresponsibility for and indifference to results.

José's heart began to beat more regularly. He again took the captain's hand. He was eager to see him depart. *"Bueno pues, Señor Capitán,"* he said hurriedly. "I wish you every felicitation on your return trip. Ah—ah—your orders contained no reference to—to me?" he added hesitatingly.

"None whatever, *Señor Padre,"* replied the captain genially. He turned to go, and José stifled a great sigh of relief. But suddenly the captain stopped; then turned again.

"Caramba!" he ejaculated, "I nearly forgot! *Hombre!* what would His Grace have said?"

He fumbled in an inner pocket and drew forth a telegraphic document.

"And you will seize the person of one Rosendo Ariza's daughter and immediately send her with proper conveyance to the Sister Superior of the convent of Our Lady in Cartagena," he read aloud.

José froze to the spot. From within Rosendo's house came a soft, scurrying sound. Then he heard a movement in his own. Morales returned the folded message to his pocket and started to enter the house. José could offer no resistance. He was rendered suddenly inert, although vividly conscious of a drama about to be enacted in which he and his loved ones would play leading *rôles.* As in a dream he heard the captain address Rosendo and gruffly demand that he produce his daughter. He heard a deep curse from Rosendo; and his blood congealed more thickly as he dwelt momentarily on the old man's possible conduct in the face of the federal demand. He heard Morales hunting impatiently through the shabby rooms. Then he saw him emerge in a towering rage—but empty-handed.

"Caramba, Padre!" cried the angry captain, "but what is this? Have they not had one good lesson, that I must inflict another? I demand to know, has this Rosendo Ariza a daughter?"

He stood waiting for the answer that José knew he must make. The priest's hollow voice sounded like an echo from another world.

"Yes."

"Bien, then I have discovered one honest man in yourself, Padre. You will now assist me in finding her."

"I—I know not—where—where she is, *Señor Capitán,"* murmured José with feebly fluttering lips.

They were alone, this little party of actors, although many

an eye peered out timidly at them from behind closed shutters and barred doors around the *plaza*. Don Jorge and Rosendo came out of the house and stood behind José. The captain confronted them, bristling with wrath at the insolence that dared oppose his supreme authority. The heat had already begun to pour down in torrents. The morning air was light, but not a sound traversed it. The principals in this tense drama might have been painted against that vivid tropical background.

Then Harris, moved by his piquant Yankee curiosity, appeared at the door of the parish house, his great eyes protruding and his head craned forth like a monster heron. Morales saw him. "Ha!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps the *Americano* hides the daughter of Ariza!"

He started for the priest's door. But ere he reached it Reed suddenly appeared from behind Harris. In his hand he grasped a large American flag. Holding this high above his head, he blocked the entrance.

"Hold! *Señor Capitán!*" he cried in his perfect Spanish. "We are American citizens, and this house is under the protection of the American Government!"

Morales fell back and stood with mouth agape in astonishment. The audacity of this foreign adventurer fairly robbed him of his breath. He glanced dubiously from him to the priest. Then, to save the situation, he broke into an embarrassed laugh.

"*Bien,* my good friend," he finally said, addressing Reed in his courtliest manner, "all respect to your excellent Government. And, if you will accept it, I shall be pleased to secure you a commission in the Colombian army. But, my orders—you understand, do you not? The sun is already high, and I can not lose more time. Therefore, you will kindly stand aside and permit me to search that house." He motioned to his men and moved forward.

Still holding aloft the flag, Reed drew a long revolver. Harris quickly produced one of equal size and wicked appearance. Morales stopped abruptly and looked at them in hesitation. He knew what he might expect. He had heard much of American bravery. His chief delight when not in the field was the perusal of a battered history of the American Civil War; and his exclamations of admiration for the hardihood of those who participated in it were always loud and frequent. But he, too, had a reputation to sustain. The Americans stood grimly silent before him. Harris's finger twitched nervously along the trigger, and a smile played over his thin lips. The man was aching for a scrimmage.

Then, his face flaming with shame and chagrin, Morales turned to his escort and commanded them to advance.

Up went the two revolvers. A moment more, and—

A cry came from Rosendo's house. Ana, her face swollen with weeping, clasping her sightless babe to her bosom, had emerged and faced the captain.

"Señor," she said in a voice strained to a whisper, "I am the daughter of Rosendo Ariza."

A half-suppressed exclamation burst from the lips of Rosendo. A desperate, suffocating joy surged over the riven soul of the priest. Don Jorge's mouth opened, but no sound came forth. This precipitate *dénoûment* held them rigid with astonishment.

A heavy silence descended upon them all. In the eyes of José Ana's tense figure, standing grim and rigid before the captain, took on a dignity that was majestic, a worth that transcended all human computation. A Magdalen, yes, standing with her sin-conceived child clasped in her trembling arms. But this act—God above! this sacrificial act broke the alabaster box and spread the precious nard over the feet of the pitying Christ.

Morales turned questioningly to José. "Is this true, Padre?" he asked.

"It is," murmured the dazed priest, scarce hearing his own words.

"But—I have no orders respecting a child—"

"They cannot be separated," half whispered José, not daring to meet the vacant gaze of the babe.

The captain hesitated a moment longer. Then, with an upward glance at the sun, he gave a sharp command to his men. Placing the woman between them, the two soldiers faced about and moved quickly away. With a low bow and a final *"Adios, Señores,"* the captain hurriedly joined them. Ere the little group before Rosendo's house had collected their wits, the soldiers and their frail charge had mounted the hill beyond the old church and disappeared into the matted trail that led from it to the distant river.

Rosendo was the first to break the mesmeric silence. *"Dios arriba!"* he cried. His knees gave way beneath him and he buried his face in his hands. "Anita—!"

Then he rose hastily, and made as if to pursue the soldiers. José and Don Jorge restrained him.

"Hombre!" cried Don Jorge, "but it is the hand of Providence! It is better so! Listen, friend Rosendo, it but gives us time to act! Perhaps many days! When the mistake is discovered they will return, and they will bring her back unharmed—though they may not learn until she reaches Cartagena! *Bien,* we can not waste time in mourning now! Courage, man! Think—think hard!"

Rosendo strove to unravel his tangled wits. José went to him and clasped his big hand.

"Rosendo—friend—would you have it different? I—I alone am to blame that they took Anita! But—it was to save—to save— Ah, God! if I did wrong, take the American's revolver and shoot me!" He tore open his cassock and stook rigid before the dazed man. Anguish and soul-torture had warped his features.

"*Caramba!* Enough of such talk!" cried Don Jorge impatiently. "We shall find plenty of others more deserving of shooting, I think! The girl—where is she?"

Reed turned back into the parish house, and emerged a moment later with Carmen and Doña Maria, who knew not as yet of Ana's departure. "I hid them in your bedroom, Padre," Reed explained.

José threw him a look of gratitude. "Doña Maria," he cried, "do you take Carmen into your house and await our decision! And you, men, go into my study! It is as Don Jorge says, we must act quickly! Leave your flag hanging, Mr. Reed! It may serve to protect us further against the angry people of Simití!"

The five men quickly gathered in José's living room in a strained, excited group. The priest was the first to speak. Rapidly he related in detail Don Mario's last confession. When he had closed, Reed made reply.

"Old man," he said, familiarly addressing José, "having seen the girl, I do not at all wonder that blood has been shed over her. But to keep her another hour in Simití is to sacrifice her. Get her away—and at once! If not, the people will drive you out. I talked with Fernando last night. With the soldiers gone, the people will rise up against you all."

"But, friend, where shall we go?" cried José in desperation. "There is no place in Colombia now where she would be safe!"

"Then leave the country," suggested Reed.

"It can not be done," interposed Don Jorge. "It would be impossible for him to escape down the river with the girl, even if he had funds to carry her away from Colombia, which he has not. At any port he would be seized. To take the trail would only postpone for a short time their certain capture. And then—well, we will not predict! To flee into the jungle—or to hide among the *peones* along the trails—that might be done—yes."

"What's the gibberish about now, pal?" put in Harris, whose knowledge of the Spanish tongue was *nil.*

Reed explained to him at some length.

"Well, that's easy," returned Harris. "Tell 'em you'll take the girl out yourself. She's white enough to pass as your daughter, you know."

Rosendo, stunned by the sudden departure of Ana, had sat in a state of stupefaction during this conversation. But now he roused up and turned to Reed. "What says he, señor?" he inquired thickly.

The latter translated his friend's suggestion, laughing as he commented on its gross absurdity.

Rosendo dropped his head again upon his chest and lapsed into silence. Then he rose unsteadily and passed a hand slowly across his brow. A strange light had come into his eyes. For a moment he stood looking fixedly at Reed. Finally he began to speak.

"Señores," he said, rolling his syllables sonorously, "the time has come at last! For years I have waited, waited, knowing that some day the great gift which the good God put into my hands for the little Carmen would be needed. Señores, my parents were slaves. The cruel Spaniards drove them to and from their heavy labors with the lash; and when the great war ended, they sank exhausted into their graves. My parents —I have not told you this, Padre—were the slaves of Don Ignacio de Rincón!"

An exclamation burst from the astonished priest's lips. What, then, had this man been concealing all these years? Little wonder that he had hesitated when he learned that a Rincón had come to the parish of Simití!

The old man quickly resumed. As he continued, his recital became dramatic. As they listened, his auditors sat spellbound.

"Don Ignacio de Rincón himself was kind of heart. But his overseers—ah, *Dios arriba!* they were cruel! cruel! Many a time the great lash wound itself about my poor father's shrinking body, and hurled him shrieking to the ground—and why? Because his blistered hands could not hold the *batea* with which he washed gold for your grandfather, Padre, your grandfather!"

José's head sank upon his breast. A groan escaped him, and tears trickled slowly down his sunken cheeks.

"I bear you no malice, Padre," continued Rosendo. "It was hard those first days to accept you here. But when, during your fever, I learned from your own lips what you had suffered, I knew that you needed a friend, and I took you to my bosom. And now I am glad—ah, very glad, that I did so. But, though my confidence in you increased day by day, I could never bring myself to tell you my great secret—the secret that now I reveal for the sake of the little Carmen. Padre—señores—I—*I am the owner of the great mine, La Libertad!*"

Had the heavens collapsed the astonishment of Don Jorge and the priest could not have been greater. The coming of the

soldiers, the terrific strain of the past few days, culminating in the loss of Ana—all was for the moment obliterated.

José started up and tried to speak. But the words would not come. Rosendo paused a moment for the effect which he knew his revelation would produce, and then went on rapidly:

"Padre, the mine belonged to your grandfather. It produced untold wealth. The gold taken from it was brought down the Guamocó trail to Simití, and from here shipped to Cartagena, where he lived in great elegance. I make no doubt the gold which you and the little Carmen discovered in the old church that day came from this same wonderful mine. But the ore was quartz, and *arrastras* were required to grind it, and much skill was needed, too. He had men from old Spain, deeply versed in such knowledge. Ah, the tales my poor father told of that mine!

"*Bien*, the war broke out. The Guamocó region became depopulated, and sank back into the jungle. The location of the mine had been recorded in Cartagena; but, as you know, when Don Ignacio fled from this country he destroyed the record. He did the same with the records in Simití, on that last flying trip here, when he hid the gold in the altar of the old church. And then the jungle grew up around the mine during those thirteen long years of warfare—the people who knew of it died off—and the mine was lost, utterly lost!"

He stopped for breath. The little group sat enthralled before him. All but Harris, who was vainly beseeching Reed to translate to him the dramatic story.

"Padre," continued Rosendo at length, "from what my father had told me I had a vague idea of the location of that mine. And many a weary day I spent hunting for it! Then—then I found it! Ah, *Caramba!* I wept aloud for joy! It was while I was on the Tiguí, washing gold. I was working near what we used to call *Pozo Cayman*, opposite La Colorado, where the Frenchmen died. I camped on the lonely bank there, with only the birds and the wondering animals to keep me company. One dark night, as I lay on the ground, I had a dream. I believe in dreams, Padre. I dreamt that the Virgin, all in white, came to me where I lay—that she whispered to me and told me to rise quickly and drive away the devil.

"I awoke suddenly. It was still dark, but a pair of fiery eyes were gleaming at me from the bush. I seized my *machete* and started after them. It was a jaguar, Padre, and he fled up the hill from me. Why I followed, I know not, unless I thought, still half asleep as I was, that I was obeying the Virgin.

"At the top of the hill I lost the animal—and myself, as well. I am a good woodsman, señores, and not easily lost. But

this time my poor head went badly astray. I started to cut through the bush. At last I came to the edge of a steep ravine. I clambered down the sides into the gully below. I thought it looked like an old trail, and I followed it. So narrow was it at times that the walls almost touched. But I went on. Then it widened, and I knew that at last I was in a trail, long since abandoned—and how old, only the good God himself knew!

"But my story grows as long as the trail! On and on I went, crossing stream after stream, scaring snakes from my path, frightening the birds above, who doubtless have never seen men in that region, all the time thinking I was going toward the Tiguí, until at last the old sunken trail led me up a tremendous hill. At the top, buried in a dense matting of brush, I fell over a circle of stones. They were the remains of an ancient *arrastra.* Further on I found another; and still another. Then, near them, the stone foundations of houses, long since gone to decay. From these the trail took me into a gully, where but little water flowed. It was lined with quartz bowlders. I struck off a piece from one of the largest. It showed specks of gold! My eyes danced! I forgot that I was lost! I went on up the stream, striking off piece after piece from the great rocks. Every one showed specks of free gold. *Caramba!* I reached the top of the hill. *Hombre!* how can I tell it! Tunnel after tunnel yawned at me from the hillside. Some of these were still open, where they had been driven through the hard rock. Others had caved. I had my wallet, in which I always carry matches and a bit of candle. I entered one of the open tunnels. *Dios arriba!* far within I crossed a quartz vein—I scraped it with my *machete. Caramba!* it could not have been less than six feet in width—and all speckled with gold! Above it, far into the blackness, where bats were scurrying madly, the ore had been taken out long, long ago. In the darkness below I stumbled over old, rusted tools. Every one bore the inscription, 'I de R.' Your grandfather, Padre, put his stamp on everything belonging to him. Then, as I sat trying to place myself, my father's oft-told story of the location of the mine flashed into my brain. My memory is good, Padre. And I knew then where I was. I was at the headwaters of the Borrachera. *And I had discovered La Libertad!*"

Reed's eager ears had drunk in every word of the old man's dramatic story. His practical mind had revolved its possibilities. When Rosendo paused again, he quickly asked:

"The title, señor?"

Rosendo drew forth a paper from his bosom. It bore the government stamp. He handed it to Reed.

"You will recall, Padre," he said, addressing the dully won-

dering José, "that I once asked you to give me a name for a mine—a rare name? And you told me to call it the—the—what is it?"

"The Chicago mine, Rosendo?" replied José, recalling the incident.

"Yes," exclaimed the old man excitedly, "that is it! *Bien,* I told no one of my discovery of years before. I had never had money enough to get the title to it. Besides, I was afraid. But when it seemed that I might soon have use for it I sold my *finca* for funds and had Lázaro apply through Don Mario for title to a mine called—called—"

"The Chicago mine," said José, again coming to the rescue.

"Just so! *Bien,* Lázaro got the title, which I never could have done, for at that time Don Mario would not have put through any papers for me. I then had the unsuspecting Lázaro transfer the title to me, and—*Bien,* I am the sole owner of La Libertad!"

Reed examined the paper at some length, and then handed it back to Rosendo. "Can we not talk business, señor?" he said, speaking with some agitation. "I am so situated that I can float an American company to operate this mine, and allow you a large percentage of the returns. Great heavens!" he exclaimed, unable longer to contain himself, "it is your fortune!"

"Señor," replied Rosendo, slowly shaking his head, "I want no share in any of your American companies. But—your friend—he has suggested just what has been running through my mind ever since you came to Simití."

José's heart suddenly stopped. The wild, terrifying idea tore through his fraught brain. He turned quickly to Reed and addressed him in English. "No—no—it is impossible! The old man wanders! You can not take the girl—!"

"Certainly not!" ejaculated Reed with some warmth. "Such a thing is quite out of the question!"

"Stuff!" exclaimed Harris. "Now look here, Mr. Priest, Reed's wife is in Cartagena, waiting for him. Came down from New York that far for the trip. Kind of sickly, you know. What's to prevent her from taking the girl to the States and placing her in a boarding school there until such time as you can either follow, or this stew down here has settled sufficiently to permit of her returning to you?"

Reed threw up a deprecatory hand. "Impossible!" he cried.

"But," interposed Harris exasperatedly, "would you leave the ravishing little beauty here to fall into the hands of the cannibals who are trailing her? Lord Harry! if it weren't for the looks of the thing I'd take her myself. But you've got a

wife, so it'd be easy." He leaned over to Reed and concluded in a whisper, "The old man's going to make a proposition—listen!"

"But," remonstrated the latter, "the expense of keeping her in New York indefinitely! For, unless I mistake much, none of these people will ever see the States after she leaves. And then I have an adopted daughter on my hands! And, heaven knows! now that my ambitious wife is determined to break into New York society with her adorable sister, I have no money to waste on adopted children!"

Rosendo, who had been studying the Americans attentively during their conversation, now laid a hand on Reed's. "Señor," he said in a quiet tone, "if you will take the little Carmen with you, and keep her safe from harm until Padre José can come to you, or she can be returned to us here, I will transfer to you a half interest in this mine."

José sprang to his feet. His face was blanched with fear. "Rosendo!" he cried wildly, "do not do that! *Dios arriba*, no! You do not know this man! Ah, señor," turning to Reed, "I beg you will forgive—but Rosendo is mad to suggest such a thing! We cannot permit it—we—I—oh, God above!" He sank again into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

Don Jorge gave vent to a long, low whistle. Rosendo, his voice husky and his lips trembling, went on:

"I know, Padre—I know. But it must be done! I will give the mine to the American—and to Carmen. He has a powerful government back of him, and he is able to defend the title and save her interest as well as his own. As for me, I—*Bien*, I shall want nothing when Carmen goes—nothing."

"For heaven's sake!" burst in Harris, seizing Reed's arm. "If you don't tell me what all this is about now I shall shoot—and not straight up, either!"

"Señores," said Reed in a controlled voice, "let me talk this matter over with my friend here. I will come to you in an hour."

Rosendo and Don Jorge bowed and silently withdrew from the parish house. The former went at once to apprise the wondering Doña Maria of the events which had crowded the morning's early hours and to answer her apprehensive questionings regarding Ana. Carmen was to know only that Ana—but what could he tell her? That the woman had sacrificed herself for the girl? No; but that they had seized this opportunity to send her, under the protection of Captain Morales, to the Sisters of the Convent of Our Lady. The old man knew that the girl would see only God's hand in the event.

José as in a dream sought Carmen. It seemed to him that

once his arms closed about her no power under the skies could tear them asunder. He found her sitting in the doorway at the rear of Rosendo's house, looking dreamily out over the placid lake. Cucumbra, now old and feeble, slept at her feet. As the man approached he heard her murmur repeatedly, "It is not true—it is not true—it is not true!"

"Carmen!" cried José, seizing her hand. "Come with me!"

She rose quickly. "Gladly, Padre—but where?"

"God only knows—to the end of the world!" cried the frenzied man.

"Well, Padre dear," she softly replied, as she smiled up into his drawn face, "we will start out. But I think we had better rest when we reach the shales, don't you?"

Then she put her hand in his.

CHAPTER 35

"NO, Padre dear," with an energetic shake of her head, "no. Not even after all that has seemed to happen to us do I believe it true. No, I do not believe it real. Evil is not power. It does not exist, excepting in the human mind. And that, as you yourself know, can not be real, for it is all that God is not."

They were seated beneath the slowly withering *algarroba* tree out on the burning shales. José still held the girl's hand tightly in his. Again he was struggling with self, struggling to pass the border-line from self-consciousness to God-consciousness; striving, under the spiritual influence of this girl, to break the mesmeric hold of his own mortal beliefs, and swing freely out into his true orbit about the central Sun, infinite Mind.

The young girl, burgeoning into a marvelous womanhood, sat before him like an embodied spirit. Her beauty of soul shone out in gorgeous luxuriance, and seemed to him to envelop her in a sheen of radiance. The brilliant sunshine glanced sparkling from her glossy hair into a nimbus of light about her head. Her rich complexion was but faintly suggestive to him of a Latin origin. Her oval face and regular features might have indicated any of the ruddier branches of the so-called Aryan stock. But his thought was not dwelling on these things now. It was brooding over the events of the past few weeks, and their probable consequences. And this he had just voiced to her.

"Padre dear," she had said, when his tremulous voice

ceased, "how much longer will you believe that two and two are seven? And how much longer will you try to make me believe it? Oh, Padre, at first you did seem to see so clearly, and you talked so beautifully to me! And then, when things seemed to go wrong, you went right back to your old thoughts and opened the door and let them all in again. And so things couldn't help getting worse for you. You told me yourself, long ago, that you would have to empty your mind of its old beliefs. But I guess you didn't get them all out. If you had cleaned house and got your mind ready for the good thoughts, they would have come in. You know, you have to get ready for the good, before it can come. You have to be receptive. But you go right on getting ready for evil. If you loved God—really *loved* Him—why, you would not be worried and anxious today, and you would not be believing still that two and two are seven. You told me, oh, so long ago! that this human life was just a *sense* of life, a series of states of consciousness, and that consciousness was only mental activity, the activity of thought. Well, I remembered that, and put it into practice—but you didn't. A true consciousness is the activity of true thought, you said. A false consciousness is the activity of false thought. True thought comes from God, who is mind. False thought is the opposite of true thought, and doesn't come from any mind at all, but is just supposition. A supposition is never really created, because it is never real—never truth. True thought becomes externalized to us in good, in harmony, in happiness. False thought becomes externalized to us in unhappiness, sickness, loss, in wrong-doing, and in death. It is unreal, and yet awfully real to those who believe it to be real. Why don't you act your knowledge, as you at first said you were going to do? I have all along tried to do this. Whenever thoughts come to me I always look carefully at them to see whether they are based on any real principle, on God. If so, I let them in. If not, I drive them away. Sometimes it has been hard to tell just which were true and which false. And sometimes I got caught, and had to pay the penalty. But every day I do better; and the time will come at last when I shall be able to tell at once which thoughts are true and which untrue. When that time comes, nothing but good thoughts will enter, and nothing but good will be externalized to me in consciousness. I shall be in heaven—all the heaven there is. It is the heaven which Jesus talked so much about, and which he said was within us all. It is so simple, Padre dear, so simple!"

The man sat humbly before her like a rebuked child. He knew that she spoke truth. Indeed, these were the very things that he had taught her himself. Why, then, had he failed to

demonstrate them? Only because he had attempted to mix error with truth—had clung to the reality and immanence of evil, even while striving to believe good omnipotent and infinite. He had worked out these theories, and they had appeared beautiful to him. But, while Carmen had eagerly grasped and assimilated them, even to the consistent shaping of her daily life to accord with them, he had gone on putting the stamp of genuineness and reality upon every sort of thought and upon every human event as it had been enacted in his conscious experience. His difficulty was that, having proclaimed the allness of spirit, God, he had proceeded to bow the knee to evil. Carmen had seemed to know that the mortal, material concepts of humanity would dissolve in the light of truth. He, on the other hand, had clung to them, even though they seared the mind that held them, and became externalized in utter wretchedness.

"When you let God's thoughts in, Padre, and drive out their opposites, then sickness and unhappiness will disappear, just as the mist disappears over the lake when the sun rises and the light goes through it. If you really expected to some day see the now 'unseen things' of God, you would get ready for them, and you would 'rejoice always,' even though you did seem to see the wickedness of Padre Diego, the coming of the soldiers, the death of Lázaro and Don Mario, and lots of unhappiness about yourself and me. Those men are not dead—except to your thought. You ought to know that all these things are the unreal thoughts externalized in your consciousness. And, knowing them for what they really are, the opposites of God's thoughts, you ought to know that they can have no more power over you than anything else that you know to be supposition. We can suppose that two and two are seven, but we can't make it true. The supposition does not have any effect upon us. We know that it isn't so. But as regards just thought—and you yourself said that everything reduces to thought—why, people seem to think it is different. But it isn't. Don't you understand what the good man Jesus meant when he told the Pharisees to first cleanse the cup and platter within, that the outside might also be clean? Why, that was a clear case of externalization, if there ever was one! Cleanse your thought, and everything outside of you will then become clean, for your clean thought will become externalized. You once said that you believed in the theory that 'like attracts like.' I do, too. (I believe that good thoughts attract good ones, and evil thoughts attract thoughts like themselves.) I have proved it. And you ought to know that your life shows it, too. You hold fear-thoughts and worry-thoughts, and then, just as

soon as these become externalized to you as misfortune and unhappiness, you say that evil is real and powerful, and that God permits it to exist. Yes, God does permit all the existence there is to a supposition—which is none. You pity yourself and all the world for being unhappy, when all you need is to do as Jesus told you, and know God to be infinite Mind, and evil to be only the suppositional opposite, without reality, without life, without power—unless you give it these things in your own consciousness. You don't have to take thought for your life. You don't have to be covetous, or envious, or fearful, or anxious. You couldn't do anything if you were. These things don't help you. Jesus said that of himself he could do nothing. But—as soon as he recognized God as the infinite principle of all, and acted that knowledge—why, then he raised the dead! And at last, when his understanding was greater, he dissolved the mental concept which people called his human body. Don't you see it, Padre—don't you? I *know* you do!"

Yes, he saw it. He always did when she pleaded thus. And yet:

"But, Carmen, padre Rosendo would send you out of the country with these Americans!"

"Yes, so you have said. And you have said that you have always feared you would lose me. Is that fear being externalized now? I have not feared that I would lose you. But, Padre dear—"

The ghastly look on the man's face threw wide the floodgates of her sympathy. "Padre—all things work together for good, you know. Good is *always* working. It never stops. Listen—" She clung more closely to him.

"Padre, it may be best, after all. You do not want me to stay always in Simití. And if I go, you will go with me, or soon follow. Oh, Padre dear, you have told me that up in that great country above us the people do not know God as you and I are learning to know Him. Padre—I want to go and tell them about Him! I've wanted to for a long, long time."

The girl's eyes shone with a holy light. Her wistful face glowed with a love divine.

"Padre dear, you have so often said that I had a message for the world. Do not the people up north need that message? Would you keep me here then? The people of Simití are too dull to hear the message now. But up there—Oh, Padre, it may be right that I should go! And, if it is right, nothing can prevent it, for the right *will* be externalized! Right *will* prevail!"

True, there was the girl's future. Such a spirit as hers could not long be confined within the narrow verges of Simití.

He must not oppose his egoism to her interests. And, besides, he might follow soon. Perhaps go with her! Who knew? it might be the opening of the way to the consummation of that heart-longing for—

Ah, the desperate joy that surged through his yearning soul at the thought! The girl was fifteen. A year, two, three, and he would still be a young man! She loved him—never had man had such proofs as he of an affection so divine! And he worshiped her! Why hesitate longer? Surely the way was unfolding!

"Carmen," he said tenderly, drawing her closer to him, "you may be right. Yes—we will both go with the Americans. Once out of this environment and free from ecclesiastical chains, I shall do better."

The girl looked up at him with brimming eyes. "Padre dear," she whispered, "I want to go—away from Simití. Juan —he asks me almost every day to marry him. And he becomes angry when I refuse. Even in the church, when Don Mario was trying to get us, Juan said he would save me if I would promise to marry him. He said he would go to Cartagena and kill the Bishop. He follows me like a shadow. He—Padre, he is a good boy. I love him. But—I do not—want to marry him."

They sat silent for some moments. José knew how insistent Juan had become. The lad adored the girl. He tormented the priest about her.

"Padre, you—you are not always going to be a priest—are you? And—I—I—oh, Padre dear, I love you so!" She turned impulsively and threw both arms about his neck. "I want to see you work out your problem. I will help you. You can go with me—and I can always live with you—and some day—some day—" She buried her face in his shoulder. The artless girl had never seemed to think it unmaidenly to declare her love for him, to show him unmistakably that she hoped to become his wife.

The man's heart gave a mighty leap. The beautiful child in his arms was human! Young in years, and yet a woman by the conventions of these tropic lands. He bent his head and kissed her. Why, she had long insisted that she would wait for him! And why should he now oppose the externalization of that sweet thought?

"Ah, *chiquita*," he murmured, "I will indeed go with you now! I will send my resignation to the Bishop at once. No, I will wait and send it from the States. I will renounce my oath, abjure my promise—"

The girl sat suddenly upright and looked earnestly into his

eyes. "What do you mean, Padre?" she queried dubiously. "What did you promise?"

"Ah, I have never told you. But—I promised my mother, dearest one, that I would always remain a priest—unless, indeed, the Church herself should eject me from the priesthood. But, it was foolish—"

"And your mother—she expects you to keep your word?"

"Yes, *chiquita.*"

The girl sat in pensive silence for a moment. "But, Padre," she resumed, "honesty—it is the very first thing that God requires of us. We have to be—we *must* be honest, for He is Truth. He cannot see or recognize error, you know. And so He cannot see you and help you if you are dishonest."

"I know, child. And I tried to be honest, even when circumstances and my own poor resistive force combined to direct me into the priesthood. But—since that day I have lived a life of hypocrisy, not knowing how to shape my course. Then, at length, I met you. It was—too late!"

"But, Padre, the Church has not put you out? You are still a priest?"

"Yes," sadly; "and no."

"But, if you went to the States—with me—would you be put out of the Church?"

"Possibly, *chiquita.*"

"And what would that mean, Padre?"

"The disgrace that always attaches to an apostate priest, child."

"And, Padre—your mother—what would she say?"

José hung his head. "It would kill her," he replied slowly.

Carmen reflected long, while José, with ebbing hope, waited. "Padre dear," she finally said, "then you have not yet worked out your problem—have you?"

No, he knew that. And he was now attempting to solve it by flight.

"I mean, Padre, you have not worked it out in God's way. For if you had, no one would be hurt, and there could not be any disgrace, or unhappiness—could there?"

"But, *chiquita,*" he cried in despair, "nothing but excommunication can release me! And I long ago ceased to look for that. You do not understand—you are young! What can I do?" His tortured soul pleaded in agony.

"Why, Padre dear, you can work it out, all out, in God's way."

"But—must I remain here—can I let you go alone with the Americans—?"

"Yes, you can, if it is right," she answered gently.

"Carmen!" he cried, straining her in his arms. "If you go with the Americans, I shall, I must, go too!"

"Not unless it is right, Padre," she insisted. "If it is right, nothing can keep you from going. But, unless it is God's way—well, you can not solve your problem by running away from it."

"But—child—to remain here means—God above! you don't realize what it may mean to us both!"

The girl relapsed into silence. José began to feel that they were drifting hopelessly, abysmally apart. Desperation seized him.

"Carmen!" he cried miserably. "I have been cheated and thwarted all my wretched life! I can endure it no longer! I can not, would not, hold you here, if the way opens for you to go! But—I can not remain here without you—and live!"

"That is not true, Padre," replied the girl, slowly shaking her head. "No human being is necessary to any one's happiness. And progress always comes first. You are trying to 'acquire that mind which was in Christ.' If you are really progressing, why, you will surely be happy. But you must work it all out God's way."

"His way!" he retorted bitterly. "And that—"

"You must be honest, Padre, honest with Him and with everybody. If you can no longer be a priest—if you are not one, and never have been one—you must be honest with the Church and with yourself. You must see and reflect only Truth. Why do you not write to the Bishop and tell him all about it? You say you have been protecting me. But leave me to God. You must—Padre, you *must*—be honest! Write to your mother—write to the Bishop. Tell them both how you feel. Then leave it all with God. Do not run away. Throw yourself upon Him. But—oh, Padre dear, you must trust Him, and you must—you *must*—know that He is good, that He is infinite, and that there is no evil! Otherwise, the good can not be externalized. If you did that, your problem would be quickly solved."

She rose and took his hand. "Padre dear," she continued, "God is life—there is no death. God is eternal—there is no age. God is all good—there is no poverty, no lack, no loss. God is infinite, and He is mind—there is no inability to see the right and to do it. God is my mind, my spirit, my soul, my all. I have nothing to fear. Human mental concepts are not real. You, yourself, say so. I am not afraid of them. I look at God constantly, and strive always to see only Him. But He is just as much to you as He is to me. You can not outline how things will work out; but you can know that they can only work out in the right way. You *must* work as God directs.

Only by so doing can you solve your problem. I try always to work that way. And I have always worked for you that way. I have always thought the time would come when you and I would live and work together—always. But I have not insisted on it. I have not said that it *had* to be. If it works out that way, I know I would be very happy. But, even if it does not, I shall know that I can not be deprived of any good, for the good God is everywhere, and He is love, and He has given me all happiness. And now we must leave everything to Him, while we work, work, work to see Him only everywhere."

She would talk no more. Suffering himself to be led by her, they crossed the shales to the dust-laden road and made their way silently through the burning heat into the village.

At the door of the parish house stood Rosendo. His face was grave, but his manner calm. "Padre," he announced, "it is arranged."

José's knees shook under him as he followed the old man into the house. Reed, Harris, and Don Jorge sat about the table, on which were strewn papers covered with figures and sketches. The priest sat down dumbly and drew Carmen to him. Harris fell to devouring the girl with his bulging eyes. Reed at once plunged into the topic under consideration.

"I have been saying," he began, addressing the priest, "that I can accept the proposal made by Don Rosendo, but with some amendments. Mr. Harris and I are under contract with the Molino Company to report upon their properties along the Boque river. I am informed by Don Rosendo that he is acquainted with these alleged mines, and knows them to be worthless. Be that as it may, I am obliged to examine them. But I will agree to take this girl to New York, under the protection of my wife, upon the consideration that when I reach my home city I be allowed to form a company to take over this mine, returning to the girl a fifty-one per cent interest in the stock, one half of which she agrees in writing to deliver to me immediately upon its issuance. Being under contract, I can not accept it now. The balance of the stock must be sold for development purposes. I further agree to place the girl in a boarding school of the first quality in the States, and to bear all expenses of her maintenance until such time as she is either self-supporting, or one or several of you may come to her, or effect her return to Colombia. Now, according to Ariza's sketches, we may proceed up the Boque river to its headwaters —how far did you say, friend?"

"Some hundred and fifty miles from Simití, señor," replied Rosendo.

"And then," resumed Reed, "we can cut across country

from the sources of the Boque, following what is known as Rosario creek, down to the river Tiguí, striking the latter somewhere near the ancient point known as La Colorado."

"But, señor," interposed Rosendo, "remember that the headwaters of the Boque are practically unknown to-day. Many years ago, when I was a small lad, some liberated slaves worked along Rosario creek, which was then one day's journey on foot with packs from La Colorado. But that old trail has long since disappeared. Probably no one has been over it since."

"Very well," returned the practical Reed, "then we shall have to make our own trail across the divide to the Tiguí. But once at La Colorado, you tell me there is an ancient trail that leads down to Llano, on the Nechí river?"

"Yes, to the mouth of the Amacerí. Llano was something of a town long ago. But river steamers that go up the Nechí as far as Zaragoza once a month, or less frequently, still touch there, I am told. And so you can get down the Cauca to Magangueу, where you can change to a Magdalena river boat for Calamar. Then by rail to Cartagena. The trail to Llano can not be more than fifty miles in length, and fairly open."

Harris, who had been studying the sketches, whistled softly. "Lord Harry!" he muttered, "nearly two hundred miles, and all by foot, over unspeakable jungle trails!"

Reed paid no attention to him. "Very well, then," he continued, "we had best set out as soon as possible. To you, friend Rosendo, I leave all arrangements regarding supplies and *cargadores*. I will furnish funds for the entire expedition, expecting to be reimbursed by La Libertad."

Carmen listened, with dilated eyes. As for José, his head swam. Starting hurriedly after Rosendo, who rose immediately to inaugurate preparations, he drew him into the latter's house. *"Hombre!"* he cried, his whole frame tremulous with agitation, "do you know what you are doing? Do you—"

"Na, Padre," replied Rosendo gently, as he held up a restraining hand, "it is best. I want the *Americanos* to take Carmen. She is not safe another day here. The soldiers left but yesterday. They may return any hour. At any moment an order might come for your arrest or mine. We must get her away at once. We can do no more for her here. The struggle has been long, and I weary of it." He sat down in exhaustion and mopped his damp brow. "I weary of life, Padre. I would be through with it. I am old. This world can hold little more for me. If I can but know that she is safe—*Bien,* that is all. From what we have learned, this country will soon be plunged again into war. I do not wish to live through another revolution. I have seen many. I seem to have fought

all my life. And for what? What is La Libertad to me? Nothing—less than nothing. I have not the funds to work it. I doubt if I could even hold it, were it known here that I had the title to such a famous mine. But the *Americano* can hold it. And he is honest, Padre. He will save Carmen's interest, and deal fairly with her. *Bien,* let him place her in a school in the States. If you weather the oncoming revolution, then you may be able to send for her. *Quien sabe?"*

José controlled himself. "Rosendo," he said, "I will go with her."

The old man looked at him quizzically. "Do you mean, Padre, that you will leave the Church?"

José kept silent for some time. Then he spoke bitterly. "Can I remain longer in Simití, where the people have become divided—where they look upon me askance, as the cause of the trouble that has befallen them? Is not my usefulness here ended? War is at our door. What, think you, will it mean to Simití? To us? And Wenceslas, what has he further in store for you and me? What he has for Carmen, we well know. And we seek by flight to save her. But the disappearance of Diego has not been explained. The trick which Anita played upon Morales to save Carmen must bring down increased wrath upon our heads, especially yours and mine. No, Rosendo, you and I must go, and go at once!"

"And Anita—?"

"We will pick her up in Cartagena. Don Jorge will accompany us. I have certain information to give him that will enlist his services—information which, I think, will serve to introduce him to His Grace, and somewhat abruptly. But, come, Rosendo, do you and Doña Maria prepare for flight!"

"Maria and I? The States! *Na,* Padre, it is impossible! I will go with the *Americanos* up the Boque and to La Libertad. Then I will return to Simití—or to the *hacienda* of Don Nicolás, if Maria wishes to remain there while I am in the hills. But—do you go, Padre—go and look after the girl. There is nothing further for you here. Yes, Padre, go—go!"

"But—ah, Rosendo, you will reconsider? The Americans will take us all for that mine!"

"I? No, Padre," said the old man firmly, but in a voice heavy with sadness. "Maria and I remain in Simití. My work is done when I have seen the girl safely out of this unhappy country. I could not live in the States. And my days are few now, anyway. Let me end them here. How, I care not."

Carmen came bounding in and flew into Rosendo's arms. "Padre Rosendo!" she cried, aglow with animation, "we are all going to the States up north! I am going to take them

my message! And I am going to school there! Oh, padre, isn't it beautiful!"

"Ah, *chiquita,*" said Rosendo cheerily, straining her to him, "I guess we have decided to send you on ahead—a little ahead of us. Your old padre has some business he must attend to here before he leaves." His eyes grew moist. José knew what his effort at cheerfulness was costing him.

"But, padre Rosendo, you will come—later? You promise? You must!" She looked into his eyes, pleading wistfully.

"Yes, little one, yes—of course. For where you are, there your old padre will always be—always—always!"

"And Padre José?" panted the girl under Rosendo's tight grasp as she turned her head toward the priest.

"He goes with us," assured Rosendo—"I think—at least as far as the coast. He will see Anita—and—" His voice broke, and he turned abruptly away.

"And she will go to the States with us! Oh, padre!" cried the girl, bounding up and down with joy.

José turned and went quickly into his own house. With grim determination he drew the battered haircloth trunk from beneath his bed and began to throw his few effects into it.

But he had scarce begun when Juan, now bearing the proud title of official courier between Simití and Bodega Central, entered with a letter. José recognized the writing, and tore it open at once. It was from his mother.

"My beloved son, at last, after these many years of most rigid economy, even of privation, I have saved enough from my meager income, together with what little you have been able to send me from time to time, and a recent generous contribution from your dear uncle, to enable me to visit you. I shall sail for Colombia just as soon as you send me detailed instructions regarding the journey. And, oh, my son, to see you offering the Mass in your own church, and to realize that your long delayed preferment is even at hand, for so your good uncle informs me daily, will again warm the blood in a heart long chilled by poignant suffering. Till we meet, the Blessed Virgin shield you, my beloved son."

The letter slipped from the priest's fingers and drifted to the floor. With a moan he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER 36

WHAT had kept José de Rincón chained all these years to an institution to which in thought, feeling, and sympathy he was so utterly alien, we have repeatedly pointed out—a warped sense of filial devotion, a devotion that would not willingly bring sorrow upon his proud, sensitive

mother, and yet the kind that so often accomplishes just that which it strives to avoid. But yet he had somehow failed to note the nice distinction which he was always making between the promises he had given to her and the oath which he had taken at his ordination. He had permitted himself to be held to the Church by his mother's fond desires, despite the fact that his nominal observance of these had wrecked his own life and all but brought her in sorrow to the grave. The abundance of his misery might be traced to forgetfulness of the sapient words of Jesus: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Then had come Carmen. And he had sacrificed his new-found life to the child. He had exhausted every expedient to keep himself in Simití, that he might transfer his own great learning to this girl, and at the same time yield himself to her beneficent influence. Yet, despite his vague hopes, he had always dimly seen the day when she would leave him; but he had likewise tried to feel that when it arrived his own status would be such that the ecclesiastical ties which bound him would be loosened, and he would be free to follow her. Alas! the lapse of years had brought little change in that respect.

But now he saw the girl entering upon that very hour of departure which all his life in Simití had hung like a menacing cloud above him. And the shock had been such that he had thrown every other consideration to the winds, and, regardless of consequences, was madly preparing to accompany her. Then, like a voice from the tomb, had come his mother's letter.

He slept not that night. Indeed, for the past two nights sleep had avoided his haggard eyes. In the feeble glow of his candle he sat in his little bedroom by his rough, bare table, far into the hours of morning, struggling, resolving, hoping, despairing—and, at last, yielding. If he had been born anew that fateful day, seven years before, when Rosendo first told him the girl's story, he had this night again died. When the gray hours of dawn stole silently across the distant hills he rose. His eyes were bleared and dull. His cheeks sunken. He staggered as he passed out through the living room where lay the sleeping Americans. Rosendo met him in front of the house.

"Padre!" exclaimed the old man as he noted the priest's appearance.

José held up a warning hand. "Do not speak of it, Rosendo. I am not well. But not a word to Carmen!"

Rosendo nodded understandingly. "It has been hard on

you, Padre. But you will soon be off now. And in the States with her—"

"For God's sake, friend, never speak of that again!" cried José sharply. "Listen! How long will it take to complete your preparations?"

"Bien," returned the amazed Rosendo when he recovered his breath, "we can get away to-morrow."

"Can you not go this evening?"

"No, Padre. There is much to do. But you—"

"Hear me, friend. Everything must be conducted in the greatest secrecy. It must be given out that the Americans go to explore the Boque; that you accompany them as guide; that Carmen goes as—as cook, why not?"

"Cierto, she cooks as well as Maria."

"Very well. Juan must be kept in complete ignorance of the real nature of your trip. He must not go with you. He is the courier—I will see that Fernando sends him again to Bodega Central to-morrow, and keeps him there for several days. You say it is some two hundred miles to Llano. How long will it take to go that distance?"

"Why—*Quien sabe,* Padre?" returned Rosendo thoughtfully. "With a fair trail, and allowing the *Americanos* some time to prospect on the Boque—where they will find nothing—and several days to look over La Libertad, we ought to reach Llano in six weeks."

"And Cartagena?"

"A week later, if you do not have to wait a month on the river bank for the boat."

"Then, all going well, within two months Carmen should be out of the country."

"Surely. You and she—"

"Enough, friend. I do not go with her."

"What? *Caramba!"*

"Go now and bid Carmen come to me immediately after the *desayuno.* Tell Doña Maria that I will eat nothing this morning. I am going up to the old church on the hill."

Rosendo stared stupidly at the priest. But José turned abruptly and started away, leaving the old man in a maze of bewilderment.

In the gloom of the old church José threw himself upon a bench near the door, and waited torpidly. A few moments later came a voice, and then the soft patter of bare feet in the thick dust without. Carmen was talking as she approached. José rose in curiosity; but the girl was alone. In her hand she held a scrubby flower that had drawn a desperate nourishment from the barren soil at the roadside. She glanced up at José and smiled.

"It is easy to understand their language, isn't it, Padre? They don't speak as we do, but they reflect. And that is better than speaking. They reflect God. They stand for His ideas in the human mind. And so do you. And I. Aren't they wonderful, these flowers! But you know, they are only the way we interpret certain of God's wonderful ideas. Only, because we mortals believe in death, we see these beautiful things at last reflecting our thought of death—don't we? We see only our thoughts, after all. Everything we see about us is reflected thought. First we see our thoughts of life and beauty and good. And then our thoughts of decay and death.

"But God—He never sees anything but the good," she went on. "He sees the real, not the supposition. And when we learn to see only as He does, why, then we will never again see death. We will see ourselves as we really are, immortal. God sees Himself that way. Jesus learned to see that way, didn't he? His thought was finally so pure that he saw nothing but good. And that gave him such power that he did those things that the poor, ignorant, wrong-thinking people called miracles. But they were only the things that you and I and everybody else ought to be doing to-day—and would be doing, if we thought as he did, instead of thinking of evil.

"But," she panted, as she sat down beside him, "I've talked a lot, haven't I? And you sent for me because you wanted to talk. But, remember," holding up an admonitory finger, "I shall not listen if you talk anything but good. Oh, Padre dear," looking up wistfully into his drawn face, "you are still thinking that two and two are seven! Will you never again think right? How can you ever expect to see good if you look only at evil? If I looked only at wilted flowers I would never know there were any others."

"Carmen," he said in a hollow voice, "I love you."

"Why, of course you do," returned the artless girl. "You can't help it. You have just *got* to love me and everything and everybody. That's reflecting God."

He had not meant to say that. But it had been floating like foam on his tossing mind. He took her hand.

"You are going away from me," he continued, almost in a whisper.

"Why, no, Padre," she replied quickly; "you are going too! Padre Rosendo said we could start to-morrow at sunrise."

"I do not go," he said in a quavering voice. "I remain in Simiti."

She looked up at him wonderingly. What meant this change which had come over him so suddenly? She drew closer.

"Why, Padre?" she whispered.

His mother's face hovered before him in the dim light. Behind her a mitered head, symbolizing the Church, nodded and beckoned significantly. Back of them, as they stood between him and the girl, he saw the glorified vision of Carmen. It was his problem. He turned wearily from it to the gentle presence at his side.

"Why, Padre dear?" came again the soft question.

"I stay—to work out—my problem," was his scarcely audible reply.

The girl did not speak. But her breath came more quickly, and her hand closed more tightly about his.

"Dearest one," he murmured, bending over the brown curls, "it is God's way, I guess. Perhaps in the years which I have spent here with you I have had the time and the opportunity to work out my salvation. I am sure that I have. But, though I strove in my way, I could not quickly acquire your spirituality. I could not at once shake loose those poisonous thoughts of a lifetime, which have at last become externalized in separation from all that I hold dearest in this life, you, my beloved girl, you." He buried his face in her luxuriant hair and strove to hold back the rush of scalding tears.

"It but shows how poisonous thoughts separate us from all that is good—even from God," he continued in a choked voice. "Oh, my sweet girl, I love you as it seems to me no human being could love another! It has been so from that first day when, a mere babe, your wonderful eyes held me until I could read in them a depth of love for mankind that was divine." It did not seem to him that a mature man was speaking to a mere girl. She seemed, as always, ages beyond him in wisdom and experience.

Carmen reached up and wound her arms about his neck. He bent low and kissed her brow. Then he drew himself up quickly and resumed his broken talk.

"I believed at first that my salvation lay in you. And so it did, for from your clear thought I gleaned my first satisfying knowledge of the great principle, God. But alas! I could not seem to realize that between recognizing righteousness as 'right-thinking' and daily practicing it so as to 'prove' God there was a great difference. And so I rested easy in my first gleams of truth, expecting that they would so warm my soul that it would expand of itself out of all error."

She made as if to reply, but he checked her.

"I learned enough, I repeat, those first few months here to have enabled me to work out my salvation, even though with fear and trembling. But I procrastinated; I vacillated; I

still clung to effete beliefs and forms of thought which I knew were bound to manifest in unhappiness later. I was afraid to boldly throw myself upon my thought. I was mesmerized. Yes, the great Paul was at times under the same mesmeric spell of human belief, even after he had seen the vision of the Christ. But he worked his way steadily out. And now I see that I must do likewise, for salvation is an individual experience. No vicarious effort, even of the Christ himself, can save a man. The principle is already given us. We must apply it to our problems ourselves. My unfinished task—scarcely even begun!—lies still before me. My environment is what I have made it by my own thought. I believe you, that I can enter another only as I externalize it through righteousness, right-thinking, and 'proving' God."

He paused and bent over the silent little figure nestling so quietly at his side. His throat filled. But he caught his breath and went on.

"You, Carmen, though but a child in years, have risen beyond me, and beyond this lowly encompassment. Why, when you were a mere babe, you should have grasped your padre Rosendo's casual statement that 'God is everywhere,' and shaped your life to accord with it, I do not know. Nor do you. That must remain one of the hidden mysteries of God. But the fact stands that you did grasp it, and that with it as a light unto your feet you groped your way out of this environment, avoiding all pitfalls and evil snares, until to-day you stand at the threshold of another and higher one. So progress must ever be, I now realize. Up we must rise from one plane of human mentality to another, sifting and sorting the thoughts that come to us, clinging to these, discarding those, until, even as you have said, we learn at last instantly to accept those that mirror forth God, infinite, divine mind, and to reject those that bear the stamp of supposition."

"Padre," the girl said, lifting her beautiful face to his, "I have told you so often—when a thought comes to me that I think is not from God, or does not reflect Him, I turn right on it and kill it. You could do the same, if you would."

"Assuredly, child—if I would!" he replied in bitterness of heart. "So could all mankind. And then the millennium would be with us, and the kingdom of heaven revealed. The mesmeric belief in evil as an entity and a power opposed to good alone prevents that. Destroy this belief, and the curtain will instantly rise on eternity."

His eyes struggled with hers, as he gazed long and wistfully into them. Lost in his impassioned speech, he had for the moment seemed to be translated. Then a surge of fear-

thoughts swept him, and left him dwelling on the hazardous journey that awaited her. He wildly clutched her again to his side.

"Carmen—child—how can I let you go! So young, so tender! And that awful journey—two hundred miles of unknown jungle, to the far-off Nechí! And then the burning river, to Cartagena, where—where *he* is! And the States—God, what awaits you there!"

"Padre," she answered softly, "I shall not go unless it is right. If it is right, then God will take care of me—and of you."

Again she saw only the "right-best" thought, while he sat trembling before its opposite. And the opposite was as yet a supposition!

"Padre dear, there is no separation, you know. God is everywhere, and so there is no separation from good—is there?"

"Not in your thought, dearest child," he murmured huskily.

"Well, Padre dear, I am still with you, am I not? Can't you live one day at a time? That is what Jesus taught us. You are borrowing from to-morrow, and you have no right to do it. That's stealing. God says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' even from to-morrow."

Yes, she was still at his side. Perhaps she would not go, after all. He was borrowing, and borrowing supposition. The thought seemed to lighten his load momentarily.

"Padre dear."

"Yes, *chiquita*."

"You have been thinking so many bad thoughts of late—I don't suppose you have had any good thoughts at all about Anita's little babe?"

"The babe?" in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes. You know, it is not blind. You promised me that every day you would just *know* that."

The rebuke smote him sore. Aye, his crowning sin was revealed again in all its ugly nakedness. Egoism! His thought was always of his own troubles, his own longings, his own fears. Self-centeredness had left no room for thoughts of Ana's blind babe. And why was he now straining this beautiful girl to himself? Was it fear for her, or for himself? Yet she gave but little heed to her own needs. Always her concern was for others, others who stumbled and drooped because of the human mind's false, unreal, undemonstrable beliefs and ignorance of the allness of God.

"Ah, child," he exclaimed penitently, "such love! How

could I dare to hope ever to claim it! How can you say that you love me?"

"Why, Padre, I love the real 'you,' the 'you' that is going to be brought out, and that will become more and more clear, until at last it stands as the perfect reflection of God. Haven't I told you that, time and time again?"

"Yes, child. You love the ideal. But—to live with me—to be my—"

"Well, Padre, if we were not still human we would not be thinking that we were on earth. We have got to work out of this human way of thinking and living. And it has seemed to me that you and I could work out of it so much better together, you helping me, manifesting God's protection and care, and I helping you, as you say I can and do. And how can we live together and work together unless we marry? Ages make no difference! And time is only a human concept."

He would not try to explain her reasoning, her contempt for convention. It would be gratuitous. As for him, women had never constituted a temptation. He knew that he loved this simple, ingenuous girl with a tenderness of passion that was wholly free from the dross of mesmerism. With that he remained content.

"Padre, if you think you must stay here for a little while, to work out your problem, why, I shall just *know* that evil can not separate us. I don't like to even seem to go away without you. But—it will be only seeming, after all, won't it? God's children can not really be separated—never!"

She was still paying faithful tribute to her vision of the spiritual universe. And how her words comforted him! How like a benison they flowed over his drooping spirits!

"And now, Padre dear," she said, rising from the bench, "we have done all we could—left everything with God—haven't we? I must go now, for madre Maria told me to come back soon. She needs me."

"Don't—no, not yet! Wait—Carmen! Sing for me—just once more! Sing again the sweet melody that I heard when I awoke from the fever that day long ago!"

He drew her unresisting to his side. Nestling close against him, her head resting on his shoulder and her hand in his, she sang again the song that had seemed to lift him that distant day far, far above the pitiful longings and strivings of poor humanity, even unto the gates of the city of eternal harmony.

She finished, and the last clear, sweet note echoed through the musty room and died among the black rafters overhead. A holy silence fell upon them as they sat, hand in hand, facing the future. Hot tears were streaming down the man's cheeks.

They fell sparkling like drops of dew upon her brown curls. But he made no complaint. The girl, obedient to the vision, was reaping her reward. He, timid, wavering, doubting, was left, still pecking at the shell of his dreary environment. It was but the working of the infinite law of cause and effect. But did he imagine that out in the world she would not still find tribulation, even as the Saviour had said? Aye, she would, in abundance! But she leaned on her sustaining God. Her Christ had overcome the world. And so should she. She had already passed through such fiery trials that he knew no contrary belief in evil now could weaken or counterbalance her supreme confidence in immanent good.

"Padre dear."

"Chiquita."

"If I have to go and leave you, will you promise me that you will act your knowledge of the Christ-principle and work out your problem, so that you may come to me soon?"

The tug at his heartstrings brought a moan to his lips. He smothered it. "Yes, *chiquita.*"

"And—you will keep your promise about Anita's babe?"

"Yes."

She rose and, still holding his hand, led him down the hill and to Rosendo's house.

Throughout the remainder of that feverishly busy day the priest clung to the girl like a shadow. They talked together but little, for she was in constant demand to help her foster-mother in the preparations for the long journey. But José was ever at her side. Again and again he would seize her hand and press it to his burning lips. Again and again he would stroke her soft hair, or stretch out his hand to touch her dress as she passed him. Always when she glanced up at him the same sweet, compassionate smile glowed on her face. When she left the house, he followed. When she bent over the ash-strewn fireplace, or washed the few plain dishes, he sought to share her employment; and, when gently, lovingly repulsed, sat dully, with his yearning eyes riveted upon her. Rosendo saw him, and forgot his own sorrow in pity for the suffering priest.

The preparations carried the toilers far into the night. But at length the last bundle was strapped to its *siete*, the last plan discussed and agreed upon, and the two Americans had thrown themselves upon their cots for a brief rest before dawn. Rosendo took José aside, while Doña Maria and Carmen sought their beds.

"Fernando sends Juan to Bodega Central at daybreak," the old man said. "All has been kept secret. No one suspects our

plans. Maria remains here with you until I return. Then we may go to the *hacienda* of Don Nicolás, on the Boque. I shall tell him to have it in readiness on my return. I shall probably not get back to Simití for two months. If, as you say, you still think best not to go with the Americans and the girl, what will you do here? The people are much divided. Some say they intend to ask the Bishop to remove you. *Bien,* will you not decide to go?"

José could not make audible reply. He shook his head, and waved Rosendo away. Then, taking a chair, he went into the sleeping room and sat down at the bedside of the slumbering girl. Reaching over, he took her hand.

What was it that she had said to him that day, long gone, when Diego claimed her as his child? Ah, yes:

"Don't feel badly, Padre dear. His thoughts have only the minus sign—and that means nothing, you know."

And later, many weeks later:

"Padre, you can not think wrong and right thoughts together, you know. You can not be happy and unhappy at the same time. You can not be sick and well together." In other words, the wise little maid was trying to show him that Paul spoke directly to such as he when he wrote: Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are—?

"You can not have both good and evil, Padre," she had so often insisted. "You must want good—want it more than anything else. And then you must prepare for it by thinking right thoughts and un-thinking wrong ones. And as you prepare for good, you must *know* that it is coming. But you must not say how it shall come, nor what it shall look like. You must not say that it shall be just as you may think you would like to have it. Leave the—the externalization to God. Then it will meet all your needs.

"You see, Padre dear"—oh, how the memory of her words smote him now!—"you see, the good Jesus told the people to clean their window-panes and let in the light—good thoughts —for then these would be externalized in health, happiness, and all good, instead of the old, bad thoughts being externalized longer in sickness and evil. Don't you see?"

Aye, he saw. He saw that the Christ-idea found expression and reflection in the pure mentality of this girl. He saw that that mentality was unsullied, uneducated in the lore of human belief, and untrained to fear. He saw that the resurrection of the Christ, for which a yearning world waits, was but the rising of the Christ-idea in the human mentality. And he saw, too, that ere the radiant resurrection morn can arrive there must be

the crucifixion, a world-wide crucifixion of human, carnal thought. Follow Christ! Aye, follow him! But will ye not learn that following him means *thinking* as he did? And his thoughts were God's.

But José had tried to think aright during those years in Simití. True, but the efforts had been spasmodic. From childhood he had passed through doubt, fear, scepticism, and final agnosticism. Then he had started anew and aright. And then had come the "day of judgment," the recurrent hours of sore trial—and he had not stood. Called upon to prove God, to prove the validity of his splendid deductions, he had vacillated between the opposing claims of good and evil, and had floundered helplessly. And now he stood confronting his still unsolved problem, realizing as never before that in the solving of it he must unlearn the intellectual habits of a lifetime.

There were other problems which lay still unsolved before him as he sat there that night. The sable veil of mystery which hung about Carmen's birth had never been penetrated, even slightly. What woman's face was that which looked out so sadly from the little locket? "Dolores"—sorrowful, indeed! What tragedy had those great, mournful eyes witnessed? No, Carmen did not greatly resemble her. He used to think so, but not of late. Did she, he wondered, resemble the man? And had the mother's kisses and hot tears blurred the portrait beneath which he had so often read the single inscription, "Guillermo"? If so, could not the portrait be cleaned? But José himself had not dared attempt it. Perhaps some day that could be done by one skilled in such art.

And did Carmen inherit any of her unique traits from either of her parents? Her voice, her religious instinct, her keen mentality—whence came they? "From God," the girl would always answer whenever he voiced the query in her presence. And he could not gainsay it.

Seven years had passed. And José found himself sitting beside the sleeping girl and dumbly yielding to the separation which now had come. Was his work finished? His course run? And, if he must live and solve his problem, could he stand after she had left? He bent closer to her, and listened to the gentle breathing. He seemed again to see her, as he was wont in the years past, flitting about her diminutive rose garden and calling to him to come and share her boundless joy. "Come!" he heard her call. "Come, Padre dear, and see my beautiful thoughts!" And then, so often, "Oh, Padre!" bounding into his arms, "here is a beautiful thought that came to me to-day, and I caught it and wouldn't let it go!" Lonely, isolated child, having nothing in common with the children of

her native heath, yet dwelling ever in a world peopled with immaculate concepts!

José shook his head slowly. He thought of the day when he had approached Rosendo with his great question. "Rosendo," he had said in deep earnestness, "where, oh, where did Carmen get these ideas? Did you teach them to her?"

"No, Padre," Rosendo had replied gravely. "When she was a little thing, just learning to talk, she often asked about God. And one day I told her that God was everywhere—what else could I say? *Bien,* a strange light came into her eyes. And after that, Padre, she talked continually about Him, and to Him. And she seemed to know Him well—so well that she saw Him in every thing and every place. Padre, it is very strange—very strange!"

No, it was not strange, José had thought, but beautifully natural. And later, when he came to teach her, his constant endeavor had been to impart his secular knowledge to the girl without endangering her marvelous faith in her immanent God. In that he had succeeded, for in that there had been no obstructing thoughts of self to overcome.

And now—

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee—"

The night shadows fled. Day dawned. José still sat at the girl's bedside, dumb and motionless. Carmen awoke, and threw her arms about him. But Rosendo appeared and hurried her out to the light morning repast, for they must lose no time in starting. Every moment now was precious. By ten o'clock the savannas would be too hot to cross, and they lay some distance from Simití. Reed and Harris were bustling about, assembling the packers and cracking jokes as they strapped the chairs to the men's backs. Doña Maria's eyes were red with weeping, but she kept silence. José wandered about like a wraith. Don Jorge grimly packed his own kit and prepared to set out for the Magdalena, for he had suddenly announced his determination not to accompany Rosendo and his party, but to go back and consult with Don Carlos Norosí in regard to the future. An hour later he left Simití.

At last Rosendo's voice rang out in a great shout:

"Ya está! Vámonos!"

"Bully-bueno!" responded Harris, waving his long arms.

The *cargadores* moved forward in the direction of the Boque trail. The Americans, with a final *adios* to Doña Maria and the priest, swung into line behind them. Rosendo again tenderly embraced his weeping spouse, and then turned to José.

"The Virgin watch over you and Maria, Padre! I leave her in your care. If the war comes, flee with her to the Boque."

He threw an arm about the priest and kissed him on both cheeks. Then, calling to Carmen, he turned and started after the others.

The girl rushed into José's arms. Her tears flowed freely.

"Padre," she murmured, clinging to him and showering him with kisses, "I love you, love you, love you! I will wait for you up there. You will come—or I will come back to you. And I will work for you every day. I will know that you are God's child, and that you will solve your problem!"

Rosendo, half way down the road, turned and called sharply to her. The girl hurried after him. But again she stopped, turned around, and flew back to José, as he knelt in the dust and, with tongue cleaving to his mouth, held out his trembling arms.

"Padre, dearest, dearest Padre," she sobbed, "I love you, I love you! And—I had forgotten—this—it is for you to read every day—every day!" She thrust a folded paper into his hand. Again she tore herself away and ran after the impatient Rosendo. In a moment they were out of sight.

A groan of anguish escaped the stricken priest. He rose from his knees and followed stumbling after the girl. As he reached the shales he saw her far in the distance at the mouth of the trail. She turned, and waved her hand to him. Then the dark trail swallowed her, and he saw her no more.

For a moment he stood like a statue, striving with futile gaze to penetrate that black opening in the dense bush that had engulfed his very soul. His bloodshot eyes were wild. His lips fluttered. His hand closed convulsively over the paper which the girl had left with him. Mechanically he opened it and read:

"Dearest, dearest Padre, these four little Bible verses I leave with you; and you will promise your little girl that you will always live by them. Then your problem will be solved.

"1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

"2. Love thy neighbor as thyself.

"3. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

"4. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

"And, Padre, my dearest, dearest Padre, *God is everywhere.*"

His hand fell. His brain reeled, and he swayed like a drunken man. He turned about, muttering incoherently. Doña Maria stood behind him. Tenderly taking his arm, she led him back to the forlorn little house. Its ghastly emptiness smote him until his reason tottered. He sank into a chair

and gazed with dull, stony eyes out over the placid lake, where the white beams of the rising sun were breaking into myriad colors against the brume.

CHAPTER 37

THE two hundred miles which lay before Rosendo and his little band stretched their rugged, forbidding length through ragged cañons, rushing waters, and dank, virginal forest. Only the old man, as he trudged along the worn trail between Simití and the Inanea river, where canoes waited to transport the travelers to the little village of Boque, had any adequate conception of what the journey meant. Even the *cargadores* were unfamiliar with the region which they were to penetrate. Some of them had been over the Guamocó trail as far as Culata; a few had ascended the Boque river to its farthest navigable point. But none had penetrated the inmost reaches of the great cañon through which the headwaters tumbled and roared, and none had ever dreamed of making the passage over the great divide, the *Barra Principal,* to the Tiguí beyond.

To the Americans, fresh from the luxury and convention of city life, and imbued with the indomitable Yankee spirit of adventure, the prospect was absorbing in its allurements. Especially to the excitable, high-strung Harris, whose great eyes almost popped from his head at the continuous display of tropical marvels, and whose exclamations of astonishment and surprise, enriched from his inexhaustible store of American slang and miner's parlance, burst from his gaping mouth at every turn of the sinuous trail. From the outset, he had constituted himself Carmen's special protector, although much to Rosendo's consternation, for the lank, awkward fellow, whose lean shoulders bent under the weight of some six-feet-two of height, went stumbling and tripping along the way, swaying against every tree and bush that edged the path, and constantly giving noisy vent to his opinions regarding trails in general, and those of the tropics in particular. His only accouterment was a Winchester rifle of tremendous bore, which he insisted on carrying in constant readiness to meet either beasts of prey or savage Indians, but which, in his absent-mindedness and dreamy preoccupation, he either dragged, muzzle up, or carried at such dangerous angles that the natives were finally obliged, in self-protection, to insist that he hand the weapon over to Rosendo. To Carmen, as the days passed and she

gradually recognized his sterling qualities, he became a source of delight. Hour after hour she trotted along after him, chatting merrily in her beloved English tongue, poking fun at his awkwardness, and laughing boisterously over his quaint slang and naïve Yankee expressions. She had never heard such things from José; nor had the priest, despite his profound knowledge, ever told her such exciting tales as did Harris, when he drew from his store of frontier memories and colored his narratives with the rich tints furnished by his easy imagination.

The first day out had been one of mental struggle for the girl. She had turned into the trail, after waving a last farewell to José, with a feeling that she had never experienced before. For hours she trudged along, oblivious of her environment, murmuring, "It isn't true—it isn't true!" until Harris, his curiosity aroused by the constant repetition which floated now and then to his ears, demanded to know what it was that was so radically false.

"It isn't true that we can be separated," she answered, looking at him with moist eyes.

"We?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, God's children—people—people—who—love each other," she replied. Then she dropped her eyes in evident embarrassment, and refused to discuss the topic further.

"Lord Harry!" ejaculated Harris, pondering the cryptical remark, "you surely are a queer little dud!"

But the girl turned from him to Rosendo. He understood her. Nor would she permit the old man to leave her until, late that night, exhausted by the excitement of the day, she dropped asleep in the house of Don Nicolás, on the muddy margin of the river Boque, still clinging to Rosendo's hand.

Despite the protestations of Don Nicolás and the pleading of the *cargadores,* Rosendo stolidly refused to spend a day at Boque. Apprehension lashed him furiously on. They were still within reach of the federal authorities. He dared not rest until the jungle had swallowed them.

"Ah, *compadre,*" said Don Nicolás, in disappointment, "I would like much for you to enjoy my house while it is still clean. For the ants have visited me. *Hombre!* they swarmed down upon us but a day ago. They came out of the bush in millions, straight for the house. We fled. *Caramba!* had we remained, we should have been eaten alive. But they swept the house—*Hombre!* no human hands could have done so well. Every spider, every rat, beetle, flea, every plague, was instantly eaten, and within a half hour they had disappeared again, and we moved back into a thoroughly cleaned house!"

Harris stood with mouth agape in mute astonishment when

Carmen, whom he had constituted his interpreter, translated to him the story.

That evening, after they had eaten out in the open before the house, and the Americans had tickled the palates of the villagers with some tinned beef of uncertain quality, Don Nicolás approached Reed. "Señor," he said, "my mother, now very aged, is sick, and we think she can not recover. But you *Americanos* are wonderfully skilled, and your medicines powerful. Have you not some remedy in your pack that will alleviate the good woman's sufferings? They are severe, señor."

Reed knew how great was the faith of these simple people in the wisdom of the American, and he had reason to wish to preserve it. But he had come into that country illy prepared to cope with disease, and his medical equipment contained nothing but quinine. He reflected a moment, then turned to Harris.

"Did you smuggle any of your beloved root-beer extract into the equipment?" he inquired, his eyes twinkling.

Harris looked sheepish, but returned a sullen affirmative.

"Well," continued Reed, "dig out a bottle and we'll fix up a dose of pain-killer for our worthy host's mother."

Then he turned to Don Nicolás. *"Cierto, señor,"* he said with an air of confidence. "I have a remedy which I know to be unfailing for any disease."

He disappeared into the house, from which he emerged again in a few moments with an empty *cola* bottle. Washing this clean in the river, he partly filled it with water. Then he poured in the small bottle of root-beer extract which Harris handed him, and added a few grains of quinine. Shaking the mixture thoroughly, he carried it to Don Nicolás.

"Be very careful, señor," he admonished, giving him the bottle. "It is a medicine extremely powerful and immediate in its action. Give the señora a small teaspoonful every hour. By morning you will notice a marked change."

Don Nicolás's eyes lighted with joy, and his gratitude poured forth in extravagant expressions.

With the first indications of approaching day Rosendo was abroad, rounding up his *cargadores,* who were already bickering as to their respective duties, and arranging the luggage in the canoes for the river trip. Additional boats and men had been secured; and Don Nicolás himself expressed his intention of accompanying them as far as his *hacienda,* Maria Rosa, a day's journey up-stream.

"It was there that I hid during the last revolution," he said, "when the soldiers burned the village and cut off the

ears and fingers of our women for their rings. Ah, señores, you can not know how we suffered! All my goods stolen or burned—my family scattered—my *finca* destroyed! We lived two years at Maria Rosa, not daring to come down the river again. We wore the skins of animals for clothing. *Caramba!*" His eyes burned fiercely as he spoke, and his hands opened and closed convulsively. He was a representative of that large class of *rurales* upon whom the heaviest burdens, the greatest suffering, and the most poignant sorrow attending a political revolution always fall.

"But, señor!" he exclaimed, suddenly turning to Reed, "I had all but forgotten! My mother, she sends for you. She would see the kind American whose remedies are so wonderful. For, señor, she rose from her bed this morning restored! And you must leave us another bottle of the remedy—at whatever price, señor!"

Reed gazed at the man uncomprehendingly, until at length the truth dawned upon him. His root-beer remedy had done its work! Then a broad grin mantled his face; but he quickly suppressed it and went with Don Nicolás to receive in person his patient's effusive thanks. When he returned and took his place in the waiting boat, he shook his head. "It's past all understanding," he muttered to Harris, "what faith will do! I can believe now that it will remove mountains."

Throughout the long, interminably long, hot day the perspiring men poled and paddled, urged and teased, waded and pushed against the increasing current, until, as the shadows began to close around them, they sighted the scarcely visible opening in the bush which marked the trail to the *hacienda* of Maria Rosa. It was a desperately lonely clearing on the verge of the jungle; but there were two thatch-covered sheds, and to the exhausted travelers it gave assurance of rest and protection. Before they made the landing Rosendo's sharp eyes had spied a large ant-eater and her cub, moving sluggishly through the bush; and Reed's quick shots had brought them both down. The men's eyes dilated when the animals were dragged into the canoes. It meant fresh meat instead of salt *bagre* for at least two days.

Early next morning the travelers bade farewell to Don Nicolás and set their course again up-stream. They would now see no human being other than the members of their own little party until they reached Llano, on the distant Nechí.

"Remember," called Don Nicolás, as the canoes drifted out into the stream, "the *quebrada* of Caracolí is the third on the right. An old trail used to lead from there across to the Tiguicito—but I doubt if you find even a trace of it now.

There is no water between that point and the Tiguicito. *Conque, adios, señores, adios!*"

The hallooing of farewells echoed along the river and died away in the dark forest on either hand. Harris and Reed settled back in their canoe and yielded to the fascination of the slowly shifting scene. Carmen chose to occupy the same canoe with them, and perforce Rosendo acted as *patron*. They therefore took the lead. Between his knees Reed held the rifle upright, in readiness for any animal whose curiosity might bring it to the water's edge to view the rare pageant passing through that unbroken solitude.

The river was now narrowing, and there were often rapids whose ascent necessitated disembarking from the canoes, while the *bogas* strained and teased the lumbering dugouts up over them. In places the stream was choked by fallen trees and tangled driftwood, until only a narrow, tortuous opening was left, through which the waters raced like a mill-course, making a heavy draft on the intuitive skill of the *bogas*. Often slender islets rose from the river; and then heated, chattering, often acrimonious discussions ensued among the men as to the proper channel to take. Always on either side rose the matted, tangled, impenetrable forest wall of dense bush and giant trees, from which innumerable trailers and *bejuco* vines dropped into the waters beneath. From the surface of the river to the tops of the great trees, often two hundred feet above, hung a drapery of creeping plants, of parasitical growths, and diversified foliage, of the most vivid shades of green, inextricably laced and interwoven, and dotted here and there with orchideous flowers and strange blossoms, while in the tempered sunlight which sifted through it sported gorgeous insects and butterflies of enormous size and exquisite shades, striped and spotted in orange, blue, and vivid red. Scarcely a hand's breadth of the jungle wall but contained some strange, eerie animal or vegetable form that brought expressions of wonder and astonishment from the enraptured Americans. At times, too, there were grim tragedies being enacted before them. In one spot a huge, hairy spider, whose delicate, lace-like web hung to the water's edge, was viciously wrapping its silken thread about a tiny bird that had become entangled. Again, a shriek from beyond the river's margin told of some careless monkey or small animal that had fallen prey to a hungry jaguar. Above the travelers all the day swung the ubiquitous buzzards, with their watchful, speculative eyes ever on the slowly moving cavalcade.

Carmen sat enthralled. If her thought reverted at all to the priest, she gave no hint of it. But once, leaning back and

gazing off into the opalescent sky overhead, she murmured: "And to think, it is only the way the human mind translates God's ideas! How wonderful must they be! And some day I shall see those ideas, instead of the mortal mind's interpretations of them!"

Harris heard her, and asked her to repeat her comments in English. But she refused. "You would not understand," she said simply. And no badinage on his part could further influence her.

Rosendo, inscrutable and silent, showed plainly the weight of responsibility which he felt. Only twice that day did he emerge from the deep reserve into which he had retired; once when, in the far distance, his keen eye espied a small deer, drinking at the water's edge, but which, scenting the travelers, fled into cover ere Reed could bring the rifle to his shoulders; and again, when they were upon a jaguar almost before either they or the astonished animal realized it.

In the tempered rays of the late afternoon sun the flower-bespangled walls of the forest became alive with gaily painted birds and insects. Troops of chattering monkeys awoke from their midday *siesta* and scampered noisily through the tree-tops over the aerial highways formed by the liana vines, whose great bush-ropes, often a foot and more in thickness, stretched their winding length long distances through the forest, and bound the vegetation together in an intricate, impenetrable network. Yellow and purple blossoms, in a riot of ineffable splendor, bedecked the lofty trees and tangled parasitical creepers that wrapped around them, constituting veritable hanging gardens. Great palms, fattened by the almost incessant rains in this hot-house of Nature, rose in the spaces unoccupied by the buttressed roots of the forest giants. Splendidly tailored kingfishers swooped over the water, scarce a foot above its surface. Quarreling parrots and nagging macaws screamed their inarticulate message to the travelers. Tiny forest gems, the infinitely variegated *colibrí,* whirred across the stream and followed its margins until attracted by the gorgeous pendent flowers. On the *playas* in the hazy distance ahead the travelers could often distinguish tall, solemn cranes, dancing their grotesque measures, or standing on one leg and dreaming away their little hour of life in this terrestrial fairy-land.

Darkness fell, almost with the swiftness of a snuffed candle. For an hour Rosendo had been straining his eyes toward the right bank of the river, and as he gazed his apprehension increased. But, as night closed in, a soft murmur floated down to the cramped, toil-worn travelers, and the old man, with a glad light in his eyes, announced that they were approaching

the *quebrada* of Caracolí. A half hour later, by the weird, flickering light of the candles which Reed and Harris held out on either side, Rosendo turned the canoe into a brawling stream, and ran its nose into the deep alluvial soil. Plunging fearlessly through the fringe of delicate ferns which lined the margin of the creek, he cut a wide swath with his great *machete* and uncovered a dim trail, which led to a ramshackle, thatch-covered hut a few yards beyond. It was the tumbled vestige of a shelter which Don Nicolás had erected years before while hunting wild pigs through this trackless region. An hour later the little group lay asleep on the damp ground, wrapped in the solitude of the great forest.

The silvery haze of dawn was dimming the stars and deepening into ruddier hues that tinged the fronds of the mighty trees as with streaks of blood when Rosendo, like an implacable Nemesis, prodded his little party into activity. Their first day's march through the wilderness was to begin, and the old man moved with the nervous, restless energy of a hunted jaguar. The light breakfast of coffee and cold *arepa* over, he dismissed the *bogas*, who were to return to Boque with the canoes, and set about arranging the cargo in suitable packs for the *cargadores* who were to accompany him over the long reaches of jungle that stretched between them and Llano. Two *macheteros* were sent on ahead of the main party to locate and open a trail. The rest followed an hour later. Before the shimmering, opalescent rays which overspread the eastern sky had begun to turn downward, the little cavalcade, led by Rosendo, had taken the narrow, newly-cut trail and plunged into the shadows of the forest—

"the great, dim, mysterious forest, where uncertainty wavers to an interrogation point."

CHAPTER 38

THE emotion of the jungle is a direct function of human temperament. Where one sees in it naught but a "grim, green sepulcher," teeming with malignant, destructive forces, inimical to health, to tranquillity, to life, another—perhaps a member of the same party—will find in the wanton extravagance of Nature, her prodigious luxury, her infinite variety of form, of color, and sound, such stimuli to the imagination, and such invitation to further discovery and development, as to constitute a lure as insidious and unescapable as the habit which too often follows the first draft of the opium's fumes. There are those who profess to have journeyed

through vast stretches of South American *selva* without encountering a wild animal. Others, with sight and hearing keener, and with a sense of observation not dulled by futile lamentations over the absence of the luxuries of civilized travel, will uncover a wealth of experiences which feed the memory throughout their remaining years, and mold an irresistible desire to penetrate again those vast, teeming, baffling solitudes.

It is true, the sterner aspect of the South American jungle affords little invitation to repose or restful contemplation. And the charm which its riotous prodigality exerts is in no sense idyllic. For the jungle falls upon one with the force of a blow. It grips by its massiveness, its awful grandeur. It does not entice admiration, but exacts obeisance by brute force. Its silence is a dull roar. Its rest is continuous motion, incessant activity. The garniture of its trackless wastes is that of great daubs of vivid color, laid thick upon the canvas with the knife —never modulated, never worked into delicate shading with the brush, but attracting by its riot, its audacity, its immensity, its disdain of convention, its utter disregard of the canons cherished by the puny mind that contemplates it. The forest's appeal is a reflex of its own infinite complexity. The sensations which it arouses within the one who steps from civilization into its very heart are myriad, and often terrible. The instinct of self-preservation is by it suddenly, rudely aroused and kept keenly alive. Its inhospitality is menacing. The roar of its howling monkeys strikes terror to the timid heart. The plaintive calls of its persecuted feathered denizens echo through the mysterious vastnesses like despairing voices from a spirit world. The crashing noises, the strange, weird, unaccountable sounds that hurtle through its dimly lighted corridors blanch the face and cause the hand to steal furtively toward the loosely sheathed weapon. The piercing, frenzied screams which arise with blood-curdling effect through the awful stillness of noonday or the dead of night, turn the startled thought with sickening yearning toward the soft charms of civilization, in which the sense of protection is greater, even if actual security is frequently less.

Because of Nature's utter disregard of the individual, life is everywhere. And that life is sharply armed and on the defensive. The rising heat-waves hum with insects. The bush swarms with them. Their droning murmur crowds the air. The trunks of trees, the great, pendent leaves of plants, the trailing vines, slimy with dank vegetation, afford footing and housing to countless myriads of them, keenly alert, ferociously resistive. The decaying logs fester with scorpions.

The ground is cavernous with the burrows of lizards and crawling forms, with centipedes and fierce formicidae. Death and terror stalk hand in hand. But life trails them. Where one falls, countless others spring up to fill the gap. The rivers and *pantanos* yield their quota of variegated forms. The flat *perania*, the dreaded electric eel, infests the warm streams, and inflicts its torture without discrimination upon all who dare invade its domain. Snakes lurk in the fetid swamps and lagoons, the brilliant coral and the deadly *mápina*. Beneath the forest leaves coils the brown adder, whose sting proves fatal within three days.

To those who see only these aspects of the jungle, a journey such as that undertaken by Rosendo and his intrepid little band would prove a terrifying experience, a constant repetition of nerve-shocks, under which the "centers" must ultimately give way. But to the two Americans, fresh from the mining camps of the West, and attuned to any pitch that Nature might strike in her marvelous symphony, the experience was one to be taken in the same spirit as all else that pertained to their romantic calling. Rosendo and his men accepted the day's stint of toil and danger with dull stolidity. Carmen threw herself upon her thought, and saw in her shifting environment only the human mind's interpretation of its mixed concept of good and evil. The insects swarmed around her as around the others. The tantalizing *jejenes* urged their insidious attacks upon her, as upon the rest. Her hands were dotted with tiny blood-blisters where the ravenous gnats had fed. But she uttered no complaint; nor would she discuss the matter when Harris proffered his sympathy, and showed his own red hands.

"It isn't true," she would say. "But you have no religion, and you don't understand—as yet."

"Don't understand? And it isn't true, eh? Well, you have mighty strange beliefs, young lady!"

"But not as strange and illogical as those you hold," she replied.

"Oh, I don't believe anything," he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I'm an agnostic, you know."

"There is just where you mistake, Mr. Harris," she returned gravely. "For, instead of not believing anything, you firmly believe in the presence and power of evil. It is just those very people who boast that they do not believe in anything who believe most thoroughly in evil and its omnipotence and omnipresence."

Yes, even the animals which she saw about her were but the human mind's concepts of God's ideas—not real. Adam

had named them. In the Bible allegory, or dream, the human, mortal mind names all its own material concepts.

The days wore on with dull regularity. From the rippling Tiguicito, which they reached choking with thirst and utterly exhausted, they dropped down again to the Boque, where they established camps and began to prospect the Molino company's "near-mines," as Harris called them after the first few unsuccessful attempts to get "colors" out of the barren soil. At certain points, where there seemed a more likely prospect, they remained for days, until the men, under Rosendo's guidance, could sink pits to the underlying bedrock. Such work was done with the crudest of tools—an iron bar, wooden scrapers in lieu of shovels, and wooden *bateas* in which the men handed the loosened dirt up from one stage to another and out to the surface. It was slow, torturing work. The men grew restive. The food ran low, and they complained.

Then Harris one evening stumbled upon a tapir, just as the great animal had forded the river and was shambling into the bush opposite. He emptied his rifle magazine into the beast. It fell with a broken hip, and the men finished it with their *machetes*. Its hide was nearly a half inch in thickness, and covered with *garrapatas*—fierce, burrowing vermin, with hooked claws, which came upon the travelers and caused them intense annoyance throughout the remainder of the journey.

Then Reed shot a deer, a delicate, big-eyed creature that had never seen a human being and was too surprised to flee. Later, Fidel Avila felled another with a large stone. And, finally, monkeys became so plentiful that the men all but refused to eat them any longer.

Two weeks were spent around the mouth of the Tiguicito and the Boque cañon. Then Reed gave the order to advance. The little party shouldered their packs and began the ascent of the ragged gorge. For days they clambered up and down the jagged walls of the cut, or skirted its densely covered margin. Twice Harris fell into the brawling stream below, and was fished out by Rosendo, his eyes popping, and his mouth choked with uncomplimentary opinion regarding mountain travel in the tropics. Once, seizing a slender vine to aid him in climbing, he gave a sudden lurch and swung out unexpectedly over the gorge, hundreds of feet deep. Again Rosendo, who by this time had learned to keep one eye on the ground and the other on the irresponsible Harris, rescued him from his perilous position.

"Why don't you watch where you are going?" queried the laughing Carmen.

"I might," sputtered Harris, "if I could keep my eyes off

of you." Whereat Carmen pursed her lips and told him to reserve his compliments for those who knew how to appraise them rightly.

They camped where night overtook them, out in the open, often falling asleep without waiting to build a fire, but eating soggy corn *arepa* and tinned food, and drinking cold coffee left from the early morning repast. But sometimes, when the fatigue of day was less, they would gather about their little fire, chilled and dripping, and beg Carmen to sing to them while they prepared supper. Then her clear voice would ring out over the great cañon and into the vast solitudes on either hand in strange, vivid contrast to the cries and weird sounds of the jungle; and the two Americans would sit and look at her as if they half believed her a creature from another world. Sometimes Harris would draw her into conversation on topics pertaining to philosophy and religion, for he had early seen her bent and, agnostic that he was, delighted to hear her express her views, which to him were so childishly impossible. But as often he would voluntarily retire from the conflict, sometimes shaking his head dubiously, sometimes muttering his impatience with a mere child whose logic he, despite his collegiate training, could not refute. He was as full of philosophical theories as a nut with meat; but when she asked for proofs, for less human belief and more demonstration, he hoisted the white flag and retired from the field. But his admiration for the child became sincere. His respect for her waxed daily stronger. And by the time they had reached the great divide through which the Rosario fell, he was dimly aware of a feeling toward the beautiful creature who walked at his side day after day, sharing without complaint hardship and fatigue that sorely taxed his own endurance, that was something more than mere regard, and he had begun to speculate vaguely on a possible future in which she became the central figure.

At Rosario creek they left the great cañon and turned into the rugged defile which wound its tortuous course upward into the heights of the *Barra Principal.* They were now in a region where, in Rosendo's belief, there was not one human being in an area of a hundred square miles. He himself was in sore doubt as to the identity of the *quebrada* which they were following. But it tallied with the brief description given him by Don Nicolás. And, moreover, which was even more important, as they began its ascent there came to him that sense of conviction which every true son of the jungle feels when he is following the right course. He might not say how he knew he was right; but he followed the leading without further question.

Up over the steep talus at the base of the cañon wall they clambered, up into the narrowing *arroyo,* cutting every foot of the way, for the *macheteros* were now no longer keeping ahead of them—the common danger held the band united. Often they believed they discovered traces of ancient trails. But the jealous forest had all but obliterated them, and they could not be certain. In the higher and drier parts of the forest, where they left the creek and followed the beds of dead streams, slender ditches through which the water raced in torrents during the wet season, they were set upon by countless swarms of bees, a strange, stingless variety that covered them in a buzzing, crawling mass, struggling and fighting for the salt in the perspiration which exuded from the human bodies. Harris swore he would cease to eat, for he could not take even a mouthful of food without at the same time taking in a multitude of bees. Often, too, their *machetes* cut into great hornet nests. Then, with the shrill cry, *"Avispas!"* Rosendo would tear recklessly through the matted jungle, followed by his slapping, stumbling companions, until the maddened insects gave up the chase. Frequently they walked into huge ant nests before they realized it, sometimes the great *tucanderas,* so ferociously poisonous. "Ah, señores," commented Rosendo, as he once stopped to point out the marvelous roadway cut by these insects for miles straight through the jungle, "in the days of the Spaniards the cruel taskmasters would often tie the weak and sick slaves to trees in the depths of the forest and let these great ants devour them alive! Señores, you can never know the terrible crimes committed by the Spaniards!"

"And they were Christians!" murmured Harris, eying Carmen furtively.

But she knew, though she voiced it not, that the Spaniard had never known the Christ.

Night was spent on the summit of the divide. Then, without further respite, Rosendo urged the descent. Down through ravines and gullies; over monster bowlders; waist deep through streams; down the sheer sides of gorges on natural ladders formed by the hanging *mora* vines; skirting cliffs by the aid of tangled and interlaced roots of rank, wet vegetation; and then down again into river bottoms, where the tenacious mud challenged their every step, and the streams became an interminable morass, through which passage was possible only by jumping from root to root, where the gnarled feeders of the great trees projected above the bottomless ooze. The persecution of the *jejenes* became diabolical. At dawn and sunset the raucous bellow of the red-roarer monkeys made the air hideous. The

flickering lights of the forest became dismally depressing. The men grew morose and sullen. Reed and Harris quarreled with each other on the slightest provocation.

Then, to increase their misery, came the rain. It fell upon them in the river bottoms in fierce, driving gusts; then in sheets that blotted out the forest and wet their very souls. The heavens split with the lightning. The mountains roared and trembled with the hideous cannonade of thunder. The jungle-matted hills ran with the flood. An unvaried pall of vapor hung over the steaming ground, through which uncanny, phantasmagoric shapes peered at the struggling little band.

Again the sun burst forth, and a fiery vapor seethed above the moist earth. The reek of their damp clothing and the acrid odor of the wet soil increased the enervation of their hard travel. Again and again the peevish Harris accused Rosendo of having lost the way. The old man patiently bore the abuse. Reed chided Harris, and at length quarreled violently with him, although his own apprehension waxed continually greater. Carmen said little. Hour after hour she toiled along, floundering through the bogs, fording the deeper streams on Rosendo's broad back, whispering softly to him at times, often seizing and pressing his great horny hand, but holding her peace. In vain at evening, when gathered about the damp, smudging firewood, Harris would bring up to her the causes of her flight. In vain he would accuse the unfortunate Alcalde, the Bishop, the soldiers. Carmen refused to lend ear to it, or to see in it anything more than a varied expression of the human mind. Personality was never for a moment considered. She saw, not persons, not things, but expressions of thought in the phenomena which had combined to urge her out of her former environment and cast her into the trackless jungle.

At length, one day, when it seemed to the exhausted travelers that human endurance could stand no more, Rosendo, who had long been straining his ears in the direction straight ahead, announced that the singing noise which floated to them as they descended a low hill and plunged into a thicket of tall lush grass, undoubtedly came from the river Tiguí. Another hour of straining and plunging through the dense growth followed; and then, with a final effort, which manifested in a sort of frenzied rush, the little band emerged suddenly upon the east bank of the crystal stream, glittering and shimmering in the bright morning sun as it sang and rippled on its solitary way through the great jungle.

The men threw off their packs and sprawled full length upon the ground. Rosendo pointed across the river.

"La Colorado," he said, indicating what the Americans at

length made out to be a frame house, looming above the high grass. "And there," pointing to the north, "is *Pozo Cayman*, where the trail begins that leads to La Libertad."

That night, as they lay on the rough board floor of the house at La Colorado, Rosendo told them the story of the misguided Frenchmen who, years before, had penetrated this wild region, located a barren quartz vein, then floated a company and begun developments. A considerable colony settled here. The soil was fertile; the undeveloped country ceaselessly rich in every resource, the water pure and sparkling, and abounding in fish. The climate, too, was moderate and agreeable. It seemed to the foreigners a terrestrial paradise. But then came the insidious fever. It crept out of the jungle like a thief in the night. One by one the Frenchmen fell sick and died. Panic seized upon them. Those unafflicted fled—all but one. He remained to protect the company's property. But he, too, fell a victim to the plague. One day, as he lay burning upon his bed, he called feebly to his one remaining servant, the native cook, to bring him the little package of quinine. She hastened to comply; but, alas! she brought the packet of strychnine instead, and soon he, too, had joined his companions in that unknown country which awaits us all. The old woman fled in terror; and the evil spirits descended upon the place. They haunt it yet, and no man approaches it but with trembling.

Reed and Harris listened to the weird story with strange sensations. The clouds above had broken, and the late moon streamed through the night vapor, and poured through the bamboo walls of the house. The giant frogs in the near-by creek awoke, and through the long night croaked their mournful plaint in a weird minor cadence that seemed to the awed Americans to voice to the shimmering moon the countless wrongs of the primitive Indians, who, centuries before, had roamed this marvelous land in happy freedom, until the Spaniard descended like a dark cloud and, with rack and stake, fastened his blighting religion upon them.

A day's rest at La Colorado sufficed to revive the spirits of the party and prepare them for the additional eight or ten hour journey over boggy morass and steep hill to La Libertad. For this trip Rosendo would take only the Americans and Carmen. The *cargadores* were not to know the nature of this expedition, which, Rosendo announced, was undertaken that the Americans might explore for two days the region around the upper Tiguí. The men received this explanation with grunts of satisfaction.

Trembling with suppressed excitement, oblivious now of fatigue, hunger, or hardship, Reed and Harris followed the old

man that day over the ancient, obliterated trail to the forgotten mine of Don Ignacio de Rincón. They experienced all the sensations of those who find themselves at last on the course that leads to buried treasure. To Harris, the romance attaching to the expedition obliterated all other considerations. But Reed was busy with the practical end of it, with costs, with the problems of supplies, of transportation, and trail. Carmen saw but one vision, the man in far-off Simití, whose ancestor once owned the great mine which lay just ahead of them.

When night fell, the four stood, silent and wondering, at the mouth of the crumbling tunnel, where lay a rusted shovel bearing the scarce distinguishable inscription, "I de R."

* * * * * *

Two weeks later a group of natives, sitting at a feast of baked alligator tail, at the mouth of the Amacerí, near the dirty, straggling riverine town of Llano, rose in astonishment as they saw issuing from the clayey, wallowing Guamocó trail a staggering band of travelers, among them two foreigners, whose clothes were in shreds and whose beards and unkempt hair were caked with yellow mud. With them came a young girl, lightly clad and wearing torn rope *alpargates* on her bare feet. The heat was descending in torrents. From the neighboring town floated a brawling bedlam of human voices. It was Sunday, and the villagers were celebrating a religious *fiesta.*

"Compadres," said Rosendo, approaching the half-intoxicated group. "The boat—which way?"

One of the group, his mouth too full to speak, pointed in expressive pantomime up-stream. Rosendo murmured a fervent *"Loado sea Dios,"* and sank upon the ground.

"It will be down to-morrow—to-day, perhaps," gurgled another of the rapidly recovering feasters, his eyes roving from one member to another of the weird-looking little band.

"Lord Harry!" exclaimed Harris, as he squatted upon the damp ground and mopped his muddy brow. "I'm a salamander for heat, that's certain!"

"Señor," said Rosendo, addressing Reed, "it would be well to pay the men at once, for the boat may appear at any time; and it will not wait long."

While the curious group from the village crowded about and eagerly watched the proceedings, Reed unstrapped his pack and drew out a bundle of Colombian bills, with which he began to pay the *cargadores,* according to the reckoning which Rosendo had kept. As the last man, with a grunt of satisfaction, received his money, Harris exclaimed: "And to think, one good American dollar is worth a bushel of that paper stuff!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a shrill

whistle came echoing down the river. A cloud of smoke above the distant treetops heralded the approach of the steamer. The little party had escaped a wait of a month in the drenching heat of Llano by the narrow margin of an hour.

Rosendo hastened to Reed and drew him aside. He tried to speak, but words failed him. Reed took his hand. "I understand, my friend," he said gently. "Have no fear. The mine is all I had anticipated. My wife and I will care for the girl until we hear from you. And we will keep in touch with you, although it will take two months for a letter to reach us and our reply to get back again to Simití. The development company will be formed at once. Within six months you may expect to see the work started. It is your fortune—and the girl's."

Carmen drew close to Rosendo. "Padre, I am coming back to you—yes?"

"Cierto, chiquita!" The old man would not permit himself to say more. The girl had known for some time that he was not to accompany her to the States, and that she should not see Ana in Cartagena. To this she had at length accustomed herself.

In a few minutes the lumbering boat had swung around and thrown out its gang plank. A hurried embrace; a struggle with rushing tears; another shriek from the boat whistle; and the Americans, with Carmen standing mute and motionless between them, looked back at the fading group on shore, where Rosendo's tall figure stood silhouetted against the green background of the forest. For a moment he held his arm extended toward them. Carmen knew, as she looked at the great-hearted man for the last time, that his benediction was following her —following her into that new world into which he might not enter.

* * * * * *

Reed lifted the silent, wondering, big-eyed girl from the dinkey train which pulled into Cartagena from Calamar ten days later, and took her to the Hotel Mariana, where his anxious, fretting wife awaited. Their boat had hung on a hidden bar in the Cauca river for four interminable, torturing days.

CHAPTER 39

ON the day that Carmen arrived in Cartagena, Rosendo staggered down the Guamocó trail into Simití. On that same momentous day the flames of war again flared up throughout the country. The Simití episode, in which the President had interfered, brought Congress to the necessity of action. A few days of fiery debate followed; then the noxious measure was taken from the table and hastily enacted into a law.

But news travels slowly in Latin America, and some time was required for this act of Congress to become generally known. The delay saw Carmen through the jungle and down to the coast. There Reed lost no time in transacting what business still remained for him in Cartagena, and securing transportation for his party to New York.

José, the shadow of his former self, clung pitiably to Rosendo's hand, imploring the constant repetition of the old man's narrative. Then came Juan, flying to the door. He had seen and talked with the returned *cargadores*. The girl had not come back with them. He demanded to know why. He became wild. Neither José nor Rosendo could calm him. At length it seemed wise to them both to tell him that she had gone to the States with the Americans, and would return to Simití no more.

The blow almost crushed the lad. He rushed about the town half dazed. He gathered groups of companions about him and talked to them excitedly. He threatened Rosendo and José. Then, evidently acting on the advice of some cooler head, he rushed to his canoe and put off across the lake toward the *caño*. He did not return for several days. But when he did, the town knew that he had been to Bodega Central, and that the country was aflame with war.

* * * * * *

Reed's wife had not received Carmen in an amiable frame of mind. "For heaven's sake, Charles," she had cried, turning from his embrace to look at the wondering girl who stood behind him, "what have you here?"

"Oh, that," he laughingly replied, "is only a little Indian I lassoed back in the jungle." And, leaving the girl to the not very tender graces of his wife, he hurried out to arrange for the return voyage.

At noon, when Harris appeared at Reed's room, Carmen rushed to him and begged to be taken for a stroll through the

town. Yielding to her husband's insistence, Mrs. Reed had outfitted the girl, so that she presented a more civilized appearance. At first Carmen had been delighted with her new clothes. They were such, cheap as they were, as she had never seen in Simití. But the shoes—"Ah, señora," she pleaded, "do not make me wear them, they are so tight! I have never worn shoes before." She was beginning her education in the conventions and trammels of civilization.

As Carmen and Harris stood that afternoon in the public square, while the girl gazed enraptured at an equestrian statue of Simón Bolívar, a ragged little urchin approached and begged them to buy an afternoon paper. Harris humored him and bade Carmen ask him his name.

"Rincón," the lad answered, drawing himself up proudly.

The girl started. "Rincón!" she repeated. "Why—where do you live?"

"In the Calle Lozano," he replied, wondering why these people seemed interested in him.

Carmen translated the conversation to Harris. "Ask him who his father is," suggested the latter.

"I do not know," replied the little fellow, shaking his head. "I never saw him. He lives far away, up the great river, so Tia Catalina says. And she says he is a priest."

The color suddenly left Carmen's cheeks. "Come with me to your home," she said, taking his hand.

The boy led them willingly through the winding streets to the little upper room where, years before, he had first seen the light.

"Tia Catalina," he cried to the shabby woman who rose in amazement as the visitors entered, "see, some strangers!"

Carmen lost no time, but went at once to the heart of her question.

"The little fellow's father—he is a Rincón? And—he lives up the great river?"

The woman eyed her suspiciously for some moments without replying. But the boy answered for her. "Yes, señorita," he said eagerly, "in Simití. And his name—I am named for him—it is José. And I am going to visit him some day. Tia Catalina said I should, no, Tia?"

Harris fumbled in his pocket and drew out some money, which he handed to the woman. Her eyes lighted, and a cavernous smile spread over her wrinkled face.

"*Ah, gracias, señor,*" she murmured, bending over his hand; "we need it. The boy's father has sent us but little of late."

Carmen's heart was fluttering wildly. "Tell me," she said in

a cold voice, "the boy's father is Padre José de Rincón, of Simití? You need not fear to speak. We have just come from Simití, and have seen him. We are leaving to-morrow for the States."

"Yes, señorita," replied the woman in a thin, cracking voice, now completely disarmed of her suspicion. "The little fellow was born here some seven years ago. Ah, well I remember the day! And his mother, poor little lamb! She died the same night. But the good Padre has sent us money ever since to care for him, until of late. Señorita, why is it, think you, that he sends us so little now?"

"I—do—not—know," murmured Carmen abstractedly, scarce hearing the woman. Then she turned to the boy. She bent over him and looked long and wistfully into his eyes. He was a bright, handsome little fellow; and though her heart was crushed, she took him into it. Swallowing the lump which had come into her throat, she drew him to the window and sat down, holding him before her.

"Your father—I know him—well. He is a—a good man. But—I did not know—I never knew that he had a son." She stopped, choking.

"Tia Catalina says he is a fine man," proudly answered the boy. "And she wants me to be a priest, too. But I am going to be a bull-fighter."

"It is true, señorita," interposed the woman. "We cannot keep him from the *arena* now. He hangs about it all day, and about the slaughter-house. We can hardly drag him back to his meals. What can we do, senorita? But," with a touch of pride as she looked at him, "if he becomes a bull-fighter, he will be the best of them all!"

Carmen turned again to the woman. Her question carried an appeal which came from the depths of her soul. "Señora, is there no doubt—no doubt that Padre Rincón is the father of the boy?"

"We think not, señorita. The lad's mother died in the good Padre's arms. She would not say positively who was the boy's father. We thought at first—it was some one else. Marcelena insisted on it to her dying day. But now—now we know that it was Padre José. And he was sent to Simití for it. But—ah, señorita, the little mother was so beautiful, and so good! She—but, señorita, you are not leaving so soon?"

Carmen had risen. "Yes, my good señora," she said wearily. "We must now return to the hotel. But—here is more money for the boy. And, señora, when I reach the States I will send you money every month for him."

She took Harris's hand. "Come," she said simply, "I have seen enough of the city."

* * * * * *

At noon the next day a message from Bodega Central was put into the hand of the acting-Bishop of Cartagena, as he sat in his study, wrapped in the contemplation of certain papers before him. Hostilities had begun along the Magdalena river the day before. The gates of Cartagena were to be barricaded that day, for a boatload of rebels was about to leave Barranquilla to storm the city and seize, if possible, the customs. When he had read the message he uttered an exclamation. Had not the Sister Superior of the Convent of Our Lady reported the arrival of the daughter of Rosendo Ariza some days before? He seized his hat and left the room.

Hastening to the Department of Police, he had a short interview with the chief. Then that official despatched policemen to the office of the steamship company, and to the dock. Their orders were to arrest two Americans who were abducting a young girl. They returned a half hour later with sheepish faces. "Your Excellency," they announced to their chief, "the vessel sailed from the port an hour ago, with the Americans and the girl aboard."

The announcement aroused in Wenceslas the fury of a tiger. Exacerbation succeeded surprise; and that in turn gave way to a maddening thirst for sanguinary vengeance. He hastened out and despatched a telegraphic message to Bogotá. Then he returned to his study to await its effect.

Two days later a river steamer, impressed by the federal authorities, stopped at the mouth of the Boque, and a squad of soldiers marched over the unfrequented trail to Simití, where they arrived as night fell. Their orders were to take into custody the priest, José de Rincón, who was accused of complicity in the recent plot to overthrow the existing government.

At the same time, on a vessel plowing its way into the North, a young girl, awkwardly wearing her ill-fitting garments, hung over the rail and gazed wistfully back at the Southern Cross. The tourists who saw her heterogeneous attire laughed. But when they looked into her beautiful, sad face their mirth died, and a tender pity stirred their hearts.

CARMEN ARIZA

BOOK 3

AND while within myself I trace
The greatness of some future race,
Aloof with hermit-eye I scan
The present works of present man,—
A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,
Too foolish for a tear, too wicked for a smile!

—*Coleridge.*

CARMEN ARIZA

CHAPTER 1

THE blanket of wet fog which had hung over the harbor with such exasperating tenacity lifted suddenly, late in the raw fall afternoon, and revealed to the wondering eyes of the girl who stood alone at the rail of the *Joachim* a confusion of mountainous shadows, studded with myriad points of light which glittered and shimmered beneath the gray pall. Across the heaving waters came the dull, ominous breathing of the metropolis. Clouds of heavy, black smoke wreathed about the bay. Through it shrieking water craft darted and wriggled in endless confusion. For two days the port of New York had been a bedlam of raw sound, as the great sirens of the motionless vessels roared their raucous warnings through the impenetrable veil which enveloped them. Their noise had become acute torture to the impatient tourists, and added bewilderment to the girl.

The transition from the primitive simplicity of her tropical home had not been one of easy gradation, but a precipitate plunge. The convulsion which ensued from the culmination of events long gathering about little Simití had hurled her through the forest, down the scalding river, and out upon the tossing ocean with such swiftness that, as she now stood at the portal of a new world, she seemed to be wandering through the mazes of an intricate dream. During the ocean voyage she had kept aloof from the other passengers, partly because of embarrassment, partly because of the dull pain at her heart as she gazed, day after day, at the two visions which floated always before her: one, the haggard face of the priest, when she tore herself from his arms in far-off Simití; the other, that of the dark-faced, white-haired old man who stood on the clayey river bank at wretched Llano and watched her, with eager, straining eyes, until the winding stream hid her from his earthly sight—forever. She wondered dully now why she had left them, why she had so easily yielded to the influences which had caused

the separation. They might have fled to the jungle and lived there in safety and seclusion. The malign influences which beset them all in Simití never could have reached them in the trackless forest. And yet, she knew that had not Rosendo and José held out to her, almost to the last moment, assurances of a speedy reunion, she would not have yielded to the pressure which they had exerted, and to the allurements of life in the wonderful country to which they had sent her. Her embarrassment on the boat was due largely to a sense of awkwardness in the presence of women who, to her provincial sight, seemed visions of beauty. To be sure, the priest had often shown her pictures of the women of the outside world, and she had some idea of their dress. But that such a vast difference existed between the illustrations and the actualities, she had never for a moment imagined. Their gowns, their jewels, their coiffures held her in open-mouthed marvel, until Mrs. Reed, herself annoyed and embarrassed, remanded her to her cabin and bade her learn the impropriety of such manners.

Nor had the conduct of this lady throughout the voyage conduced to Carmen's happiness. Mrs. Reed showed plainly that the girl was an awkward embarrassment to her; that she was tolerated because of reasons which pertained solely to her husband's business; and she took pains to impress upon her fellow-travelers that, in view of the perplexing servant problem, this unmannered creature was being taken to the States to be trained as a maid, though, heaven knew! the training would be arduous, and the result uncertain.

Reed, though measurably kind, gave Carmen scant attention. Harris alone saved the girl from almost complete neglect. He walked the deck with her, regardless of the smiles of the other passengers. He taught her to play shuffle-board, checkers, and simple card games. He conducted her over the boat and explained the intricate machinery and the numberless wonders of the great craft. He sat with her out on the deck at night and told her marvelous stories of his experiences in frontier camps. And at the table he insisted that she occupy the seat next to him, despite the protestations of the chief steward, who would have placed her apart with the servants.

Carmen said little, but she clung to the man with an appeal which, though mute, he nevertheless understood. At Kingston he took her on a drive through the town, and bought post cards for her to send back to José and Rosendo. It consoled her immeasurably when he glowingly recounted the pleasure her loved ones would experience on receiving these cards; and thereafter the girl daily devoted hours to the preparation of additional ones to be posted in New York.

The lifting of the fog was the signal for a race among the stalled craft to gain the harbor entrance. The enforced retention of the vessels in the bay had resulted in much confusion in docking, and the *Joachim* was assigned to a pier not her own. The captain grumbled, but had no choice. At the pier opposite there docked a huge liner from Havre; and the two boats poured their swarming human freight into the same shed. When the gang plank dropped, Harris took charge of Carmen, while Reed and his wife preceded them ashore, the latter giving a little scream of delight as she spied her sister and some friends with a profusion of flowers awaiting her on the pier. She rushed joyfully into their arms, while Reed hastened to his equipage with a customs officer.

But as Harris and the bewildered Carmen pushed into the great crowd in the shed, the absent-minded man suddenly remembered that he had left a bundle of Panamá hats underneath his bunk. Dropping the girl's hand, the impetuous fellow tore back up the gang plank and dived into the boat.

For a moment Carmen stood in confusion, bracing herself against the swarming multitude, and clinging tenaciously to the small, paper-wrapped bundle which she carried. Her first impulse was to follow Harris. But the eager, belated crowd almost swept her off her feet, and she turned again, drifting slowly with it toward the distant exit. As she moved uncertainly, struggling the while to prevent being crushed against the wall, she felt some one grasp her hand.

"Oh, here you are!" sounded a gentle voice close to her ear. "Well, how fortunate! We thought we had lost you! Come, they are waiting for us up ahead."

Carmen looked up at the speaker. It was a woman, comely of feature, and strikingly well dressed. The girl thought her beautiful. The anxious fears of a moment before vanished. "Is he up there—Mr. Reed?" she asked quickly.

"He? Oh, yes—Mr. Reed and the others are waiting for us. They sent me back to find you. The automobiles came for you all; but I presume the others have gone by this time. However, you and I will follow in mine. I am Auntie."

"His aunt?" the girl asked eagerly, as the woman forced a way for them through the mass of humanity.

"Yes, dear. And I am so glad to see you. I have heard all about you."

"Did he write to you—from Simití?"

"Yes, long letters. And he told all about his little girl. He said your name was—"

"Carmen," interrupted the girl, with a great surge of gladness, for here was one woman who did not avoid her.

"Yes, Carmen. It is a sweet name."

"But—Mr. Harris!" cried Carmen, suddenly stopping as she remembered.

"Oh, did he wait? Well, he will come. He knows where to find the automobiles. I will leave word with the pier-master to tell him."

By this time they had wormed their way clear of the crowd and gained the street. The woman, still retaining Carmen's hand, went directly to a waiting automobile and pushed the unresisting girl through the open door. Carmen had never seen a conveyance like this, and her thought was instantly absorbed. She looked wonderingly for the horses. And then, sinking into the luxurious cushions, she fell to speculating as to how the thing was moved.

As the chauffeur reached back to close the door a policeman, who had been eying the party since they came out of the shed, stepped up and laid a hand on the car.

"Er—little girl," he said, looking in and addressing Carmen, "you—you know this lady, do you?"

"Yes," replied Carmen, looking up confidently into the woman's smiling face. "She is Auntie, Mr. Reed's aunt." She thought his blue uniform and shining buttons and star gorgeously beautiful.

The officer stood hesitant a moment. Suspicion lurked in his eyes as he looked at the woman and then back again at the girl.

"She is a little girl who came up from the South with my nephew, Mr. Reed," the woman explained easily. "But I don't wonder you asked. I will give you my card, if you wish."

Her air was supremely confident. The chauffeur, too, as he got out and leisurely examined his engine, served further to disarm suspicion. The officer raised up and removed his hand from the machine. The chauffeur slowly mounted the box and threw on his lever. As the car moved gently into the night the officer glanced at its number. "Hell!" he muttered, turning away. "What's the use? The number would be changed anyway. What's a fellow going to do in a case like this, I'd like to know—go with 'em?"

Some minutes later, Harris, wild and disheveled, followed by Reed and his party, emerged hurriedly into the street.

"What you looking for?" asked the officer, planting himself in front of Harris, and becoming vaguely apprehensive.

"Girl!" sputtered Harris, his eyes protruding and his long arms pawing the air. "Girl—so high—funny dress—big straw hat! Seen her?"

The officer gasped. "She's gone! Aunt took her just now in an auto!"

"Aunt!" yelled Harris. "She's got no aunt! She's from the jungle!"

For a moment they all stood silent, big-eyed and gaping.

"Look here, Mr. Officer," said Reed, interposing. "My name's Reed. The girl came up from South America with me. Describe the woman—"

"Reed!" cried the policeman excitedly, his eyes lighting. "That's it! Said she was your aunt!"

"Lord Harry! You great, blundering boob!" cried the distracted Harris, menacing the confused officer. "And you let her nab the kid?"

Night had fallen, and a curious crowd was gathering around the excited, noisy group. Reed quickly signaled a taxicab and hustled the bewildered officer into it. "You, Harris, get the women folks home, and wait for me! I'll go to central with this officer and report the case!"

"Not I!" exclaimed Harris wildly. "I'm going to visit every dance hall and dive in this bloomin' town before I go home! I'm going to find that girl! And you, you blithering idiot," shaking a fist at the officer, "you're going to lose your star for this!"

Meantime, the car, in which Carmen lay deep in the soft cushions, sped through the dusk like a fell spirit. A confused jumble of shadows flew past, and strange, unfamiliar noises rose from the animated streets. The lights shimmered on the moist glass. It was confusing. The girl ceased trying to read any meaning in it. It all fused into a blur; and she closed her eyes and gave herself up to the novel sensations stimulated by her first ride in a carriage propelled—she knew not how.

At length came a creaking, a soft, skidding motion, and the big car rolled up against a curb and stopped.

"We are home now," said the woman softly, as she descended and again took Carmen's hand. They hurriedly mounted the white stone steps of a tall, gloomy building and entered a door that seemed to open noiselessly at their approach. A glare of light burst upon the blinking eyes of the girl. A negro woman softly closed the door after them. With a wondering glance, Carmen looked about her. In the room at her right she caught a glimpse of women—beautiful, they seemed to her—clad in loose, low-cut, gaily colored gowns. There were men there, too; and some one sat at a piano playing sprightly music. She had seen pianos like that in Cartagena, and on the boat, and they had seemed to her things bewitched. In the room at the end of the hall men and women were dancing on a floor that seemed of polished glass. Loud talk, laughter, and singing floated through the rooms, and the air was

warm and stuffy, heavy with perfume. The odor reminded her of the roses in her own little garden in Simití. It was all beautiful, wonderful, fairy-like.

But she had only a moment for this appraisal. Seizing her hand again, the woman whisked her up the flight of stairs before them and into a warm, light room. Then, without speaking, she went out and closed the door, leaving the girl alone.

Carmen sank into a great, upholstered rocking chair and tried to grasp it all as she swayed dreamily back and forth. So this was his home, Mr. Reed's. It was a palace! Like those José had described. She wondered if Harris dwelt in a place of such heavenly beauty; for he had said that he did not live with Reed. What would the stupid people of Simití think could they see her now! She had never dreamed that such marvels existed in the big world beyond her dreary, dusty, little home town! José had told her much, ah, wonderful things! And so had Harris. But how pitifully inadequate now seemed all their stories! She still wondered what had made that carriage go in which she had come up from the boat. And what would one like it cost? Would her interest in La Libertad suffice to buy one? She speculated vaguely.

Then she rose and wandered about the room. She passed her hand over the clean, white counterpane of the bed. "Oh," she murmured, "how beautiful!" She went dreamily to the bureau and took up, one by one, the toilet articles that lay there in neat array. "Oh, oh, oh!" she murmured, again and again. She glanced into the clear mirror. The little figure reflected there contrasted so oddly with the gorgeously beautiful ones she had glimpsed below that she laughed aloud. Then she went to the window and felt of the soft curtains. "It is heaven," she murmured, facing about and sweeping the room, "just heaven! Oh, how beautiful even the human mind can be! I never thought it, I never thought it!"

Again she sat down in the big rocker and gave herself up to the charm of her surroundings. Her glance fell upon a vase of flowers that stood on a table near another window. She rose and went to them, bending over to inhale their fragrance. "How strange!" she exclaimed, as she felt them crackle in her fingers. Poor child, they were artificial! But she would learn, ere long, that they fittingly symbolized the life of the great city in which she was now adrift.

Time passed. She began to wonder why the woman did not return. Were not the Reeds anxious to know of her safe arrival? But perhaps they had visitors. Surely that was the case. It was a ball—but so different from the simple, artless

baile of her native town. Stray snatches of music drifted into the room from the piano below. It stimulated a hunger for more. She went to the door, thinking to open it a little and listen. The door was locked!

For a moment she stood reflecting. Then apprehension began to steal over her. She went hastily, instinctively, to a window and raised the curtain. There were iron bars in front of it! She remembered suddenly that prison windows were like that. She hurried to the other. It was likewise barred. Terror's clammy hand gripped at her heart. Then she caught herself—and laughed. "How silly!" she exclaimed, sinking again into the rocker. "God is everywhere—right here!"

At that moment the door opened noiselessly and a woman entered. She was younger than the one who had met the boat. When she saw the girl she uttered an exclamation. "Lord! where did you get those clothes?"

Carmen glanced down at her odd attire and then smiled up at the woman. "Cartagena," she said simply. "Mrs. Reed bought them for me. But are you her sister? You don't look like her."

The woman laughed, a sharp, unmusical laugh. The dry cosmetic plastered thick upon her cheeks cracked. She was not beautiful like the others, thought Carmen. Her cheeks were sunken, and her low-cut gown revealed great, protruding collarbones. "Come," she said abruptly, "get out of those rags and into something modern." She opened a closet door and selected a gown from a number hanging there. It was white, and there was a gay ribbon at the waist.

"It'll have to be pinned up," she commented to herself, holding it out before her and regarding Carmen critically.

The girl's eyes danced. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "am I to wear that? How beautiful! Did Mrs. Reed give it to me? And is there a party down stairs?"

The woman returned no answer, but opened a bureau drawer and took from it several other garments, which she threw upon a chair, together with the dress.

"Into the whole lot of 'em," she said sharply, indicating the garments. "And move lively, for supper's waitin' and there'll be callers soon—gentlemen callers," she added, smiling grimly.

She turned and faced Carmen. Their eyes met. The woman stopped abruptly and stood with arms akimbo, regarding the girl. Carmen gazed up at her with a smile of happy, trustful assurance.

The woman was the first to speak. "Where did you come from?" she demanded hoarsely.

Carmen told her. She mentioned Simití, Padre José, and Rosendo. Her voice quavered a little; but she brightened up and concluded: "And Mr. Reed's Auntie, she met us—that is, me. Oh, isn't she a beautiful lady!"

The woman seemed to be fascinated by the child's gaze. Then, suddenly, as if something had given way under great strain, she cried: "For God's sake, don't look at me that way! Who are you?" She dropped into a chair and continued to stare at the girl.

"Well, I've told you," replied Carmen. "But," she continued, going quickly to the woman and taking her hand, "you haven't told me your name yet. And we are going to be such good friends, aren't we? Yes, we are. And you are going to tell me all about this beautiful house, and that wonderful carriage I came here in. What did make it go, anyway? Do you ride often? Oh, I hope Mrs. Reed will take me out in it every day!"

The woman's hand tightened over Carmen's. She seemed to struggle with herself. Then, in a low voice:

"Your mother—is she living?"

"Madre Maria is," returned Carmen. "But my mother, my own real mother, she died, long, long ago, on the banks of the great river. My father left her, and she was trying to follow him. Then I was born—"

"The same old story!" muttered the woman fiercely. "I've been there, girl, and know all about it. I followed the man—but it was my kid that died! God, if I could have laid my hands on him! And now you have come here—"

She stopped abruptly and swallowed hard. Carmen gently stole an arm about her neck. "It isn't true," she murmured, laying her soft cheek against the woman's painted one. "No one can desert us or harm us, for God is everywhere. And no one really dies. We have got to know that. Padre José said I had a message for the people up here; and now you are the first one I've told it to. But that's it: *God is everywhere.* And if we know that, why, nothing bad can ever happen to us. But you didn't know it when your husband left you, did you?"

"Husband!" ejaculated the woman. Then she looked up into the girl's deep, wondering eyes and checked herself. "Come," she said abruptly, rising and still holding her hand. "Never mind the clothes." A grim look settled over her features. "We'll go down to supper now as you are."

Carmen's companion led her down the stairs and through the hall to a brightly lighted room at the rear, where about a long table sat a half dozen women. There were places for as many more, but they were unoccupied. The cloth was white,

the glass shone, the silver sparkled. And the women, who glanced up at the girl, were clad in gowns of such gorgeous hues as to make the child gasp in amazement. Over all hung the warm, perfumed air that she had thought so delicious when she had first entered the house.

The noisy chatter at once ceased. The woman led her to a chair next to the one she herself took. Carmen looked around for the lady who had met her at the boat. She was not there. The silence and the steady scrutiny of the others began to embarrass her. "Where—where is Auntie?" she asked timidly, looking up at her faded attendant.

A titter ran around the table. One of the women, who swayed slightly in her chair, looked up stupidly. "Who's Auntie?" she muttered thickly. A burst of laughter followed this remark, and Carmen sat down in confusion.

"Where's the Madam, Jude?" asked one of the younger women of Carmen's attendant.

"Dining alone in her room. Headache," was the laconic reply.

"She landed a queen this time, didn't she?" looking admiringly at Carmen. "Gets me, how the old girl does it! What's your name, kiddo?"

"Carmen," replied the girl timidly, looking questioningly about the room.

"That's a good handle. But what's the rest?" put in another.

"Carmen Ariza," the child amended, as her big, wondering eyes swept the group.

"Wow! That's a moniker for you!" laughed one. "Where do you hail from, angel-face?"

The girl looked uncomprehendingly at her interlocutor.

"Your home, you know. I see your finish, all right. But where'd you begin?"

"Tell them where you lived, child," said the woman called Jude in a low voice.

"Simití," replied Carmen, tears choking her words.

"Simití!" echoed around the table. "New York? Ohio? Or Kansas?" A burst of mirth punctuated the question.

"Do the women vote there?"

"Long way from Paris, judging by the fashions."

"Where is Simití, kidlet?"

Carmen answered in a scarcely audible voice, "South America."

Low exclamations of astonishment encircled the table, while the women sat regarding the girl curiously.

"But," continued Carmen in a trembling voice, "where is

Mrs. Reed? And isn't Mr. Harris here? Why don't they come? Don't they know I am here?"

She looked appealingly from one to another. Her beautiful face wore such an expression of mingled fear, uncertainty, and helplessness as to throw a hush upon the room. One of the women rose. "God!" she muttered, "it's a shame!" She looked for a moment uncertainly into the big, deep eyes of the girl, and then turned and hastily left the room.

The silence which followed was broken by a pallid, painted creature at the end of the table.

"What an old devil the Madam is! My God! One look into those eyes would have been enough for me!"

"What's the idea, Jude?" asked another, nodding toward the girl. "Does she stay here?"

The woman addressed as Jude shook her head. "This is only a recruiting station for the regular army. She'll go over to French Lucy's; and the Madam will get a round price for the job."

"Old Lucy'll get rich off of her! But she needs the money. Ames owns her house, too, doesn't he?"

"Sure thing!" replied Jude, brightening under the stimulus of her wine. "He owns every house in this block, they say. Got long leases for 'em all. And the rents—suffering Moses! The Madam rolls on the floor and cusses for a week straight every time she pays hers. But just the same, if you've ever noticed, the houses that Ames owns are never raided by the coppers. Ames whacks up with the mayor and the city hall gang and the chief of police. That means protection, and we pay for it in high rents. But it's a lot better'n being swooped down on by the cops every few weeks, ain't it? We know what we're expected to pay, that way. And we never do when we keep handin' it out to the cops."

"That's right," approved some one.

"It sure is. That's what the collector says. And he's got a new collector, fellow from the Ketchim Realty Company. They're the old man's agents now for his dive-houses. He can't get anybody else to handle 'em, so the collector tells me."

"Belle Carey's place was pulled last night, I hear," said one of the women, pushing back her plate and lighting a cigarette.

"Yes," returned Jude, "and why? Cause the house is owned by Gannette—swell guy livin' up on Riverside Drive—and he don't divvy with the city hall. Belle don't pay no such rent as the Madam does—at least so old Lucy tells me."

The half-intoxicated woman down the table, who had stirred their laughter a few minutes before, now roused up heavily.

"Ol' Lucy—huh! Used to work for her m'self. Caught a pippin for her once—right off the train—jus' like this li'l hussy. Went to th' depot in a hack. Saw th' li'l kid comin' an' pretended to faint. Li'l kid run to me an' asked could she help. Got her to see me safe home—tee! hee! She's workin' f'r ol' Lucy yet, sound's a dollar."

She fixed her bleared eyes upon Carmen and lapsed back into her former state of sodden stupidity.

The girl rose hastily from her chair. The policeman's words at the pier were floating confusedly through her thought. The strange talk of these women increased the confusion. Perhaps a mistake had been made. She turned beseechingly to Jude. "Isn't this—Mr. Reed's house?" she asked.

Another of the women got up hurriedly and left the table. "I haven't the nerve for another sob-scene," she commented as she went out.

"Where am I? Where am I?" pleaded Carmen, turning from one to another.

Jude reached out and seized her hand tightly. "Pleasant job for me!" she commented ironically, looking at the others. Then, to Carmen:

"You are in a—a hotel," she said abruptly.

"Oh—then—then it was a mistake?" The girl turned her great, yearning eyes upon the woman. Jude shrank under them. "Sit down, and finish your supper," she said harshly, pulling the girl toward the chair.

"No!" replied Carmen loudly. "You must take me to Mr. Reed!"

The maudlin woman down the table chuckled thickly. The negro waitress went quickly out and closed the door. Jude rose, still holding the girl's hand. "Come up stairs with me," she said, leading her away.

"Poor old Jude!" commented one of the women, when the two had left the room. "She's about all in. This sort of business is getting her nerve. But she's housekeeper, and that's part of her job. And—the poor little kid! But ain't she a beauty!"

Jude took the girl into her own room and locked the door. Then she sank wearily into a chair. "God!" she cried, "I'm sick of this—sick of the whole thing!"

Carmen went quickly to her. "Don't!" she said. "Don't! It was all a mistake, and we can go."

"Go!" echoed the woman bitterly. "Where—and how?"

"Why, you said this was a hotel—"

"Hotel! God, it's hell! And you are in forever!"

Carmen gazed at the excited woman with a puzzled expression on her face.

"Now listen," said Jude, bracing herself, "I've got something to tell you. You have been—good God! I can't—I can't! For God's sake, child, don't look at me that way! Who are you? Where do you come from?"

"I told you," replied Carmen quietly.

"Your face looks as if you had come down from the sky. But if you did, and if you believe in a God, you had better pray to Him now!"

"Why—I am not afraid. God is everywhere—right here. I was afraid—a little—at first. But not now. When we stop and just know that we love everybody, and that everybody really loves us, why, we can't be afraid any more, can we?"

The woman looked up at the child in blank amazement. Love! That warped, twisted word conveyed no meaning to her. And God—it was only a convenient execrative. But—what was it that looked out from that strange girl's eyes? What was it that held her fascinated there? What was emerging from those unfathomable depths, twining itself about her withered heart and expanding her black, shrunken soul? Whence came that beautiful, white life that she was going to blast? And could she, after all? Then what stayed her now?

"Look here," she cried sharply, "tell me again all about yourself, and about your friends and family down south, and what it was that the Madam said to you! And be quick!"

Carmen sat down at her feet, and taking her hand, went again over the story. As the child talked, the woman's hard eyes widened, and now and then a big tear rolled down the painted cheek. Her thought began to stray back, far back, along the wreck-strewn path over which she herself had come. At last in the dim haze she saw again the little New England farm, and her father, stern, but honest and respected, trudging behind the plow. In the cottage she saw her white-haired mother, every lineament bespeaking her Puritan origin, hovering over her little household like a benediction. Then night fell, swiftly as the eagle swoops down upon its prey, and she awoke from a terrible dream, stained, abandoned, lost—and seared with a foul oath to drag down to her own level every innocent girl upon whom her hands might thereafter fall!

"And I have just had to know," Carmen concluded, "every minute since I left Simití, that God was everywhere, and that He would not let any harm come to me. But when we really know that, why, the way *always* opens. For that's prayer, right prayer; the kind that Jesus taught."

The woman sat staring at the girl, an expression of utter blankness upon her pallid face. Prayer! Oh, yes, she had been taught to pray. Well she remembered, though the mem-

ory now cut like a knife, how she knelt at her beautiful mother's knee and asked the good Father to bless and protect them all, even to the beloved doll that she hugged to her little bosom. But God had never heard her petitions, innocent though she was. And He had let her fall, even with a prayer on her lips, into the black pit!

A loud sound of male voices and a stamping of feet rose from below. The woman sprang to the door and stood listening. "It's the boys from the college!" she cried in a hoarse whisper.

She turned and stood hesitant for a moment, as if striving to formulate a plan. A look of fierce determination came into her face. She went to the bureau and took from the drawers several articles, which she hastily thrust into the pocket of her dress.

"Now," she said, turning to Carmen and speaking in a low, strained voice, "you do just as I say. Bring your bundle. And for God's sake don't speak!"

Leaving the light burning, she stepped quickly out with Carmen and locked the door after her. Then, bidding the girl wait, she slipped softly down the hall and locked the door of the room to which the girl had first been taken. Both keys she dropped into her pocket. "Now follow me," she said.

Laughter and music floated up from below, mingled with the clink of glasses. The air was heavy with perfume and tobacco smoke. A door near them opened, and a sound of voices issued. The woman pulled Carmen into a closet until the hall was again quiet. Then she hurried on to another door which she entered, dragging the girl with her. Again she locked the door after her. Groping through the darkness, she reached a window, across which stood a hinged iron grating, secured with a padlock. The woman fumbled among her keys and unfastened this. Swinging it wide, and opening the window beyond, she bade the girl precede her cautiously.

"It's a fire-escape," she explained briefly. She reached through the window grating and fastened the padlock; then closed the window; and quickly descended with the girl to the ground below.

Pausing a moment to get her breath, she seized Carmen's hand and crept swiftly around the big house and into a dark alley. There she stopped to throw over her shoulders a light shawl which she had taken from the bureau. Then she hurried on.

Their course lay through the muddy alley for several blocks. When they emerged they were in a dimly lighted cross street. The air was chill, and the thinly clad woman shivered. Car-

men, fresh from the tropics, felt the contrast keenly. A few moments' rapid walking down the street brought them to a large building of yellow brick, surrounded by a high board fence. The woman unfastened the gate and hurried up to the door, over which, by the feeble light of the street lamp, Carmen read, "The Little Sisters of the Poor."

A black-robed woman admitted them and went to summon the Sister Superior. Carmen marveled at her strange attire. A moment later they were silently ushered into an adjoining room, where a tall woman, similarly dressed, awaited them.

"Sister," said Jude excitedly, "here's a little kid—you got to care for her until she finds her friends!"

The Sister Superior instantly divined the status of the woman. "Let the child wait here a moment," she said, "and you come with me and tell your story. It would be better that she should not hear."

In a little while they appeared again. Carmen was drowsing in her chair.

"She's chock full of religion," the woman was saying.

"But you," the Sister replied, "what will you do? Go back?"

"God, no!" cried the woman. "They would murder me!"

"Then you will stay here until—"

"No, no! I have friends—others like myself—I will go to them. I—I couldn't stay here—with her," nodding toward the girl. "But—you will take care of her?"

"Surely," returned the Sister in a calm voice.

Jude looked at Carmen for a moment. She made as if she would speak. Then she turned abruptly and went swiftly out into the chill night.

"Come," said the Sister to Carmen, extending a hand. "Poor little thing!" she murmured as they mounted the stairs. "Poor little thing!"

CHAPTER 2

CARMEN was astir next morning long before the rising-bell sounded its shrill summons through the long corridors. When she opened her eyes she gazed at the ceiling above in perplexity. She still seemed to feel the tossing motion of the boat, and half believed the bell to be the call to the table, where she should again hear the cheery voice of Harris and meet the tolerant smile of Mrs. Reed. Then a rush of memories swept her, and her heart went down in the flood. She was alone in a great foreign city! She turned her face to the pillow, and for a moment a sob shook her. Then she reached under the pillow

and drew out the little Bible, which she had taken from her bundle and placed there when the Sister left her the night before. The book fell open to Isaiah, and she read aloud:

> "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles."

She snapped the book shut and quickly rose. "That means me," she said firmly. "Padre José said I had a message for the world; and now I am to tell it to these people up here. God has called me in righteousness. That means, He has called me to do *right thinking*. And I am to tell these people how to think right. They don't know as yet."

Suddenly her thought reverted to Cartagena, and to the sturdy little lad who had so proudly claimed the name of Rincón. For a moment she stood still. Then she burst into tears and threw herself back upon the bed.

But she did not lie there long. "I must think only God's thoughts," she said, struggling to her feet and checking her grief. "If it is right for the little boy to be his son, then I must want it to be so. I *must* want only the right—I have *got* to want it! And if it is not right now, then God will make it so. It is all in His hands, and I must not think of it any more, unless I think right thoughts."

She dressed herself quickly, but did not put on the shoes. "I simply can not wear these things," she mourned, looking at them dubiously; "and I do not believe the woman will make me. I wonder why the other woman called her Sister. Why did she wear that ugly black bonnet? And why was I hurried away from that hotel? It was so much pleasanter there, so bright and warm; and here it is so cold." She shivered as she buttoned her thin dress. "But," she continued, "I have got to go out now and find Mr. Reed and Mr. Harris—I have just *got* to find them—and to-day! But, oh, this city is so much larger than Simití!"

She shook her head in perplexity as she put the Bible back again in the bundle, where lay the title papers to La Libertad and her mother's little locket, which Rosendo had given her that last morning in Simití. The latter she drew out and regarded wistfully for some moments. "I haven't any father or mother but God," she murmured. "But He is both father and mother to me now." With a little sigh she tied up the bundle again. Holding it in one hand and carrying the much despised shoes in the other, she left the cheerless room and started down the long, cold hall.

When she reached the stairway leading to the floor below

she stopped abruptly. "Anita's babe!" she exclaimed half-aloud. "I have been thinking only of myself. It is *not* blind! It sees! It sees as God sees! What is it that the Bible says? —'And I will bring them by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.' I must know that—always! And Padre José said he would remember it, too."

Again she choked back the tears which surged up at the remembrance of the priest, and, bracing herself, hastily descended the stairs, murmuring at every step, "God is everywhere—right here!"

At the far end of the lower hall she saw, through an open door, a number of elderly people sitting at long tables. Toward them she made her way. When she reached the door, she stopped and peered curiously within. A murmur of astonishment rose from the inmates when they caught sight of the quaint object in the doorway, standing uncertainly, with her shoes in one hand, the awkwardly tied bundle in the other, and garbed in the chaotic attire so hastily procured for her in Cartagena.

A Sister came quickly forward and, taking the girl's hand, led her into a smaller adjoining room, where sat the Sister Superior at breakfast. The latter greeted the child gently and bade her be seated at the table. Carmen dropped into a chair and sat staring in naïve wonder.

"Well," began the Sister at length, "eat your breakfast quickly. This is Sunday, you know, and Mass will be said in the chapel in half an hour. You look frightened. I don't wonder. But you are with friends here, little girl. What is your name?"

Carmen quickly recovered her spirits, and her nimble tongue its wonted flexibility. Without further invitation or preface she entered at once upon a lively description of her wonderful journey through the jungle, the subsequent ocean voyage, and the mishap at the pier, and concluded with the cryptical remark: "And, you know, Señora, it is all just as Padre José said, only a series of states of consciousness, after all!"

The Sister stared blankly at the beaming child. What manner of being was this that had been so strangely wafted into these sacred precincts on the night breeze! The abandoned woman who had brought her there, the Sister remembered, had dropped an equally cryptical remark—"She's chock full of religion."

But gratitude quickly mastered her wonder, and the woman,

pondering the child's dramatic recital, murmured a sincere, "The Virgin be praised!"

"Oh," said Carmen, looking up quickly as she caught the words, "you people up here talk just like those in Simití. But Padre José said you didn't know, either. You ought to, though, for you have had so many more ad—advantages than we have. Señora, there are many big, clumsy words in the English language, aren't there? But I love it just the same. So did Padre José. We used to speak it all the time during the last years we were together. He said it seemed easier to talk about God in that language than in any other. Do you find it so, Señora?"

"What do you mean, child?" asked the puzzled Sister. "And who is this José that you talk so much about?"

"He—taught me—in Simití. He is the priest there."

"Well," replied the Sister warmly, "he seems to have taught you queer things!"

"Oh, no!" returned Carmen quickly, "he just taught me the truth. He didn't tell me about the queer things in the world, for he said they were not real."

Again the Sister stared at the girl in dumb amazement. But the child's thought had strayed to other topics. "Isn't it cold up here!" she exclaimed, shivering and drawing her dress about her. "I guess I'll have to put on these shoes to keep my feet warm."

"Certainly, child, put them on!" exclaimed the Sister. "Didn't you wear shoes in your country?"

"No," replied Carmen, tugging and straining at the shoes; "I didn't wear much of anything, it was so warm. Oh, it is beautiful down there, Señora, so beautiful and warm in Simití!" She sighed, and her eyes filled with tears. But she brushed them away and smiled bravely up at the Sister. "I've come here because it is right," she said with a firm nod of her head. "Padre José said I had a message for you. He said you didn't know much about God up here. Why, I don't know much of anything else!" She laughed a happy little laugh as she said this. Then she went on briskly:

"You know, Señora, Padre José isn't really a priest. But he said he had to stay in the Church in order to teach me. I never could understand why. I am sure he just thought wrong about it. But, anyway, he will not have to be a priest any more, now that I have gone, will he? You know, Don Jorge said priests were a bad lot; but that isn't so, for there are many good priests, aren't there? Yes, there are. Only, they don't understand, either. Why, Señora," she exclaimed, suddenly remembering the Sister's previous injunction, "is this a church? You said there would be Mass in the chapel—"

"No," replied the Sister, still studying the girl attentively, while her manner became more severe; "this is a home for old people, a charitable institution."

"Oh," replied Carmen, with a very vague idea of what that meant. "Well," her face alight and her eyes dancing, "I don't belong here then, do I? I am never going to be old," she meditated. "Why, God never grows old! And we are His children, you know. The Bible says we are made in His image and likeness. Well, if that is so, how can we ever grow old? Just think of God hobbling around in heaven with a cane and saying: 'Well, I'm getting old now! I'll soon be dying!' Isn't that awful! We wouldn't grow old and die if it wasn't for our wrong way of thinking, would we? When we think His thoughts, why, we will be like Him. But not until then. Padre José says this, and he knows it is true—only, he seems to have a hard time proving it. But, Señora, we have all got to prove it, some time, every one of us. And then there will not be any places like this for old people—people who still believe that two and two are seven, you know. And that's my message."

The woman looked at her blankly; but the girl rambled on. "Padre José sometimes talked of the charitable institutions out in the world, and he always said that charity was a crime against the people. And he was right, for that is just the way Jesus looked at it, isn't it? Jesus did not give money to beggars, but he did better, he healed them of the bad state of mind that was making them poor and sick. Why don't the priests do that? Can you heal the sick? Jesus, when he taught, first said a thing, and then he turned right around and proved it. Now do you do that? I try to. I've tried it all my life. And, why, Señora, I've had thousands of proofs!"

The Sister did not reply; and Carmen, stealing a covert glance at her, continued:

"You know, Señora, it is just as wicked to be sick and poor as it is to tell a lie, because being sick and poor is just the ex—the ex-ter-nal-i-zation of our thought; and such thought is not from God; and so to hold such thoughts and to believe them real is to believe in power apart from God. It is having other gods than the one God; and that is breaking the very first Commandment, isn't it? Yes, it is; and you can prove it, just as you can prove the principles in mathematics. Señora, do you know anything about mathematics?"

The astonished woman made an involuntary sign of negation.

"Oh, Señora," cried the enthusiastic girl, "the things that Jesus taught can be proved just as easily as we prove the rules in mathematics! Why not? for they are truth, and all truth

can be demonstrated, you know. You know, Señora, God is everywhere—not only in heaven, but right here where we are. Heaven, Padre José used to say so often, is only a perfect state of mind; and so it is, isn't it? God, you know, is mind. And when we reflect Him perfectly, why, we will be in heaven. Isn't it simple? But," she went on after catching her breath, "we can't reflect Him as long as we believe evil to be real and powerful. Evil isn't anything. It is just zero, nothing—"

"I've heard that before," interrupted the woman, recovering somewhat from her surprise. "But I think that before you get out of New York you will reverse that idea. There's a pretty fair amount of evil here, and it is quite real, we find."

"But it isn't!" cried Carmen. "If it is real, then God made it. It seems real to you—but that is only because you give it reality in your consciousness. You believe it real, and so it becomes to you."

"Well," said the woman dryly, "on that basis I think the same may be said of good, too."

"No," answered Carmen eagerly, "good is—"

"There," interrupted the Sister coldly, holding up an admonitory hand, "we are not going to discuss the foolish theological notions which that fallen priest put into your poor little head. Finish your breakfast."

The child looked at the woman in mute protest. José a fallen priest! Would these people up here so regard him? It was a new thought, and one that she would not accept.

"Señora," she began again, after a brief interval, "Padre José is a good man, even the human Padre José. And he is trying to solve his problem and know God. And he is trying to know himself, not as other people think they know him, but as God knows him, and as I have always tried to know him. You have no right to judge him—and, anyway, you are not judging him, but only your wrong idea of him. And that," she said softly, "is nothing."

The Sister did not answer. She was beginning to feel the spell of those great brown eyes, that soft, rich voice, and the sparkling expression of innocence, purity, and calm assurance that bubbled from those red lips. And she was losing herself in contemplation of the girl's luxuriant beauty, whose rich profusion her strange, foreign attire could not disguise.

"Señora," said Carmen suddenly, "the people on the boat laughed at my clothes. But I don't think them half as funny as that great black bonnet you are wearing. Why do you wear it? I never saw one until I was brought here."

It was said innocently, and with no thought of offense. But the woman instantly roused from her meditation and assumed

an attitude of severe dignity. "Finish your breakfast," she commanded sharply. "And remember after this that children's manners here are not those of your country."

The girl fell quiet under the rebuke, and the meal ended in silence. As they were rising from the table a cheery voice came from the outer room, and presently a priest looked in.

"Good morning, Sister," he cried heartily. "Well, who's this?" as his eyes fell upon Carmen. He was a young man, apparently still in the twenties, of athletic build, inclined rather to stoutness, and with a round, shining face that radiated health and good nature.

The Sister quietly returned his cordial greeting. "It is a little waif," she said in answer to his query, "who strayed in here last night."

"Aha," said the priest, "another derelict! And will you send her to the orphanage?"

"I'm afraid if I do the little heretic will corrupt all the other children," replied the Sister. "Father," she continued seriously, "I want you to examine this child, and then tell me what you think should be done with her."

"What is it—health?" asked the priest, studying the girl.

"No," replied the Sister; "but another priest has gone wrong, and this," pointing to Carmen, "is the result of his pernicious teachings."

The priest did not reply for some moments. Then he sighed wearily. "Very well, Sister," he said in a low voice. "I will talk with her after the service." He seemed suddenly to have lost his cheerfulness, as he continued to converse with the woman on matters pertaining to the institution.

Carmen, wondering and receptive, took the place assigned to her in the chapel and sat quietly through the service. She had often seen José celebrate Mass in the rude little church in Simití, but with no such elaboration as she witnessed here. Once or twice she joined in the responses, not with any thought of worship, but rather to give vent, even if slight, to the impelling desire to hear her own musical voice. She thought as she did so that the priest looked in her direction. She thought others looked at her attentively at the same time. But they had all stared at her, for that matter, and she had felt confused and embarrassed under their searching scrutiny. Yet the old people attracted her peculiarly. Never had she seen so many at one time. And never, she thought, had she seen such physical decrepitude and helplessness. And then she fell to wondering what they were all there for, and what they got out of the service. Did the Mass mean anything to them? Did they believe that thereby their sins were atoned? Did they believe

that that priest was really changing the wafer and wine into flesh and blood? She recalled much that José had told her about the people up in the States. They were not so different, mentally, from her own, after all.

The Host had been elevated. The people, still gossiping cheerfully, had prostrated themselves before it. The sermon had been short, for the old people waxed impatient at long discourses. Then the priest descended from the pulpit and came to Carmen. "Now, little girl," he said, seating himself beside her, "tell me all about yourself, who you are, where you come from, and what you have been taught. And do not be afraid. I am your friend." Carmen smiled up at him; then plunged into her narrative.

It was two hours later when the Sister Superior looked in and saw the priest and girl still sitting in earnest conversation. She stood listening. "But," she heard the priest say, "you tell me that this Father José taught you these things?"

"He taught me English, and French, and German. He taught me mathematics. And he taught me all I know of history, and of the world," the girl replied.

"Yes, yes," the priest went on hurriedly; "but these other things, these religious and philosophical notions, who taught you these?"

The Sister drew closer and strained her ears to hear.

The girl looked down as she answered softly, "God."

The priest's head sank upon his breast. He reached out and laid a hand on hers. "I believe you," he said, in a voice scarcely audible. "I believe you—for we do not teach such things."

The girl looked up with luminous eyes. "Then," she said quizzically, "you are not really a priest."

"Father Waite!" The Sister's voice rang sternly through the quiet chapel. The priest started to his feet in confusion. "The dinner-bell will ring in a few minutes," continued the Sister, regarding the man severely.

"Ah, true," he murmured, hastily glancing at the clock. "The time passed so rapidly—a—a—this girl—"

"Leave the girl to me," replied the Sister coldly. "Unless," she added, "you consider her deranged. Coming from that hot country suddenly into this cold climate might—"

"No, no," interrupted the priest hastily; "she seems uncommonly strong mentally. She has some notions that are a—somewhat different from ours—that is—but I will come and have a further talk with her."

He raised his hand in silent benediction, while the Sister bowed her head stiffly. Then, as if loath to take his eyes from the girl, he turned and went slowly out.

"Come," said the woman sharply. Carmen followed her out into the hall and down a flight of steps to the kitchen below.

"Katherine," said the Sister Superior, addressing an elderly, white-haired Sister who seemed to be in charge of the culinary department, "put this girl to work. Let her eat with you and sleep in your room. And see if you can't work some of the foolish notions out of her head."

CHAPTER 3

"GET some o' th' foolish notions out of your head, is it? Och, puir bairn, wid yer swate face an' that hivenly hair, it's welcome ye air to yer notions! But, hist! Ye have talked too brash to the Sister Superior. Ye air that innocent, puir thing! But, mind your tongue, honey. Tell your funny notions to old Katie, an' they'll be safe as the soul of Saint Patrick; but keep mum before the others, honey."

"But, Señora, don't they want to know the truth up here?" There was a note of appeal in the quavering voice.

"Now listen, honey; don't call me sich heathen names. Call me Sister. I'm no Señora, whativer that may be. And as for wantin' to know the truth, God bless ye, honey! th' good Fathers know it all now."

"They don't, Señ—Sister!"

"Well, thin, they don't—an' mebby I'm not so far from agreein' wid ye. But, och, it's dead beat I am, after the Sunday's work! But ye air a right smart little helper, honey—only, ye don't belong in th' kitchen."

"Señ—I mean, Sister—"

"That's better, honey; ye'll get it in time."

"Sister, I've just *got* to find Mr. Reed! Do you know him?"

"No, honey, it's few I know outside these walls. But ye can put up a bit of a prayer when ye turn in to-night. An' we'd best be makin' for th' bed, too, darlin', for we've a hard day's work to-morrow."

It was Carmen's second night in New York, and as the girl silently followed the puffing old woman up the several long, dark flights of stairs to the little, cheerless room under the eaves, it seemed to her that her brain must fly apart with the pressure of its mental accumulation. The great building in which she was now sheltered, the kitchen, with its marvels of equipment, gas stoves, electric lights, annunciators, and a thousand other equally wonderful appliances which the human mind has developed for its service and comfort, held her fasci-

nated, despite her situation, while she swelled with questions she dared not ask. Notwithstanding the anxiety which she had not wholly suppressed, her curiosity, naïve, eager, and insatiable, rose mountain high. Sister Katherine had been kind to her, had received her with open arms, and given her light tasks to perform. And many times during the long afternoon the old woman had relaxed entirely from her assumed brusqueness and stooped to lay a large, red hand gently upon the brown curls, or to imprint a resounding kiss upon the flushed cheek. Now, as night was settling down over the great, roaring city, the woman took the homeless waif into her big heart and wrapped her in a love that, roughly expressed, was yet none the less tender and sincere.

"Ye can ask the Virgin, honey, to send ye to yer frinds," said the woman, as they sat in the gloaming before the window and looked out over the kindling lights of the city.

"What good would that do, Sister?"

"Not much, I guess, honey," answered the woman frankly. "Troth, an' I've asked her fer iverything in my time, from diamonds to a husband, an' she landed me in a convint! But I ain't complainin'."

"You didn't ask in the right way, Sister—"

"Faith, I asked in ivery way I knew how! An' whin I had th' carbuncle on me neck I yelled at her! Sure she may have answered me prayer, fer th' whoop I gave busted the carbuncle, an' I got well. Ye nivir kin tell, honey. An' so I ain't complainin'."

"But, Sis—I can't call you Sister!" pleaded the girl, going to the woman and twining her arms about her neck.

"Och, honey darlin' "—tears started from the old woman's eyes and rolled down her wrinkled cheeks—"honey darlin', call me Katie, just old Katie. Och, Holy Virgin, if I could have had a home, an' a beautiful daughter like you—!" She clasped the girl in her great arms and held her tightly.

"Katie, when you pray you must pray knowing that God has already given you what you need, and that there is nothing that can keep you from seeing it."

The woman wiped her eyes on her sleeve. "An' so, darlin', if I want diamonds I must know that I have 'em, is it that, honey?"

"You dear thing!" murmured Carmen, drawing closer, and laying her soft cheek against the leathery visage of the old woman.

"Say that again, honey—och, say it again! It's words, darlin', that's nivir been said to old Katie!"

"Why, hasn't any one ever been kind to you?"

"Kind! Och, ivirybody's kind to me, honey! But nobody has ivir loved me—that way. The good Lord made me a fright, honey—ain't ye noticed? I've a face like an owl. An' they told me from th' cradle up I'd nivir land a man. An' I didn't, honey; they all ran from me—an' so I become a bride o' th' Church. But I ain't complainin'."

"But, Katie, the face is nothing. Why, your heart is as big—as big as the whole world! I hadn't been with you an hour before I knew that. And, Katie dear, I love you."

"Och, darlin'," murmured the woman, "sure th' Virgin be praised fer sendin' ye to me, a lonely old woman!"

"It was not the Virgin, Katie, but God who brought me here," said the girl gently, as she caressed the old Sister's cheek.

"It's all one, honey; the Virgin's th' Mother o' God."

"Why, Katie! You don't know what you are saying!"

"Troth, child, she has th' same power as God! Don't we pray to her, an' she prays to th' good God to save us? Don't she have influence with Him?"

"No, Katie, no. There is no person or thing that persuades God to be good to His children. There is nothing that influences Him. He is infinite—infinite mind, Katie, and infinite good. Oh, Katie, what awful things are taught in this world as truth! How little we know of the great God! And yet how much people pretend they know about Him! But if they only knew—really *knew,* as Jesus did—why, Katie, there wouldn't be an old person, or a sick or unhappy one in the whole world! Katie," after a little pause, "I know. And I'm going to tell them."

The old Sister drew the child closer. "Air these more o' yer funny notions, darlin'?"

"I suppose they are what the world thinks funny, Katie," answered the girl.

"An' I don't wonder! We are not taught such things, honey. But then, th' world moves, girlie—even old Katie sees that. Only, the Church don't move with it. An' old Katie can see that, too. An' so, I'm thinkin', does Father Waite."

"I know he does, Katie."

"Faith, an' how do ye know it, child?"

"He talked with me—a long time, this morning. He said God had taught me what I know."

"Aye, is it so? Thin me own suspicions air right; he's out o' tune! Did ye say, girlie dear, that he didn't scold ye fer yer funny notions?"

"No, Katie, he said they were right."

"Did he so! Thin, lassie dear, things is goin' to happen.

An' he's a good man—troth, they make no better in this world!"

The old Sister lapsed into thought. Carmen looked out wonderingly over the city. She yearned to know what it held for her.

"Katie," she said at length, bending again over the woman, "will you help me find Mr. Reed?"

"Och, lassie—what's your name again?"

"Carmen," replied the girl, "Carmen Ariza."

"Cair-men Aree—now ain't that a name fer ye! An' yer nationality, girl?"

"I'm a Colombian, Katie."

"Whist! Where is it? In Afrikay?"

"South America," with a little sigh.

"Now think o' that! An' I'm Scotch-Irish, honey; an' we're both a long way from th' ol' sod! Lassie dear, tell me about last night. But, no; begin 'way back. Give us th' whole tale. Old Katie's weak in th' head, girlie, but she may see a way out fer ye. Th' Virgin help ye, puir bairn!"

Midnight boomed from the bell in a neighboring tower when Carmen finished her story.

"Be the Saints above!" exclaimed the old Sister, staring at the girl in amazement. "Now do ye let me feel of ye to see that ye air human; fer only a Saint could go through all that an' live to tell it! An' the place ye were in last night! Now be Saint Patrick, if I was rich I'd have Masses said every day fer that Jude who brung ye here! Don't tell me th' good Lord won't forgive her! Och, God! she's a Saint already."

"She's a good woman, Katie; and, somehow, I felt sorry for her, but I don't know why. She has a beautiful home in that hotel—"

"Hotel, is it! Hivins above! But—och, sure, it was a hotel, honey. Only, ye air better off here wi' old Katie."

"And now you will help me?"

"Help you, lassie! God bless ye, yes! But—unless it's wi' Father Waite, I don't know what I can do. Ye air in bad with th' Sister Superior fer yer talk at th' breakfast table. Ye're a fresh little heathen, honey. An' she's suspicious of Father Waite, too. We all air. An' he th' best man on airth! But his doctrine ain't just sound, swateheart. Hivins, doctrine! It means more'n a good heart! There, honey, lave it to me. But it's got to be done quick, or th' Sister Superior 'll have ye in an orphan asylum, where ye'll stay till ye air soused in th' doctrine! I can manage to get word to Father Waite to-morrow, airly. Jinny will run over fer me. A bit of a word wi' him'll fix it, lassie dear. An' now, honey swate, off with

them funny clothes and plump into bed. Saints above! it's all but marnin' now!"

A few minutes later the woman turned to the girl who lay so quiet at her side.

"Honey," she whispered, "was ye tellin' me awhile back that ye knew the right way to pray?"

"Yes, Katie dear," the child murmured.

"Thin do you pray, lass, an' I'll not trouble the Virgin this night."

* * * * * *

"Well, Father, what do you think now?" The Sister Superior looked up aggressively, as Father Waite slowly entered the room. His head was bowed, and there was a look of deep earnestness upon his face.

"I have talked with her again—an hour, or more," he said reflectively. "She is a—a remarkable girl, in many ways." He stopped, uncertain how to proceed.

The Sister eyed him keenly. "She attracts and repels me, both," she said. "At times she seems positively uncanny. And she appears to be suffering from religious dementia. Do you not think so?"

It was a compromising question, and the priest weighed his words carefully before replying. "She does—seem to—to have rather—a—rather unusual—religious views," said he slowly.

"Would it not be well to have Dr. Sullivan examine her?"

"To what end?"

"That we may know what to do with her. If she is mentally unsound she must not be sent to the orphanage."

"She should be taken—a—I mean, we should try to locate her friends. I have already searched the city directory; but, though there are many Reeds, there are none listed with the initials she gave me as his. I had thought," he continued hesitatingly, "I had thought of putting her in charge of the Young Women's Christian Association—"

"Father Waite!" The Sister Superior rose and drew herself up to her full height. "Do you mean to say that you have contemplated delivering her into the hands of heretics?" she demanded coldly, her tall figure instinct with the mortal pride of religious superiority.

"Why, Sister," returned the priest with embarrassment, "would it not be wise to place her among those whose views harmonize more closely with hers than ours do?"

"Father! I am surprised—!"

"But—she is not a Catholic!" urged the man, with a gesture of impatience. "And she will never be one. The combined weight of all the centuries of church authority could not make

her one—never! I must take her to those with whom she rightfully belongs."

The Sister Superior's eyes narrowed and glittered, and her face grew dark. "Never!" she said in a low tone. "I would rather see her dead! Father Waite, you exceed your authority! I am in charge here, and I shall report this case to the Bishop!"

The priest stood hesitant for a moment. The futility of his case seemed to impress him. Taking up his hat, he bowed without speaking and went out. The Sister Superior stepped to the telephone. Outside the door the man listened until he caught the number she called. His face grew dark and angry, and his hands clenched as he strode down the hall.

On the stairs that led up from the kitchen stood Sister Katherine.

"Hist! Father!"

He stopped and turned to the woman. Her finger went up to her lips.

"Wait on th' corner—behind the church! The lassie will meet you there!"

Before he could reply the woman had plunged again into the dark stairway. Stopping at a small closet below, she took out a bundle. Then she hurried to the kitchen and summoned Carmen, who was sitting at a table peeling potatoes.

"Troth, lazy lass," she commanded sharply, "do you take the bucket and mop and begin on the front steps. And mind that ye don't bring me heavy hand down on ye! Och, lassie darlin'," she added, when she had drawn the startled girl out of hearing of the others, "give yer old Katie a kiss, and then be off! Troth, it breaks me heart to see ye go—but 'twould break yours to stay! Go, lassie darlin', an' don't fergit old Katie! Here," thrusting the girl's bundle and a dollar bill into her hands, "an' God bless ye, lass! Ye've won me, heart an' soul! Ye'll find a frind at th' nixt corner!" pointing up the street. She strained the girl again to her breast, then opened the door and hastily thrust her out into the street.

For a moment Carmen stood dazed by the suddenness of it all. She looked up confusedly at the great, yellow building from which she had been ejected. There was no visible sign of life. Then, grasping her bundle and the dollar bill, she hurried out through the gate and started up the street.

Around the corner stood Father Waite. The man's face was furrowed, and his body trembled. The girl went up to him with a glad smile. The priest looked up, and muttered something incoherent under his breath as he took her hand.

"Where are we going, Padre?" she asked.

He drew some loose change from his pocket, and hailed an approaching street car.

"To police headquarters," he replied, "to ask them to help us find your friends."

CHAPTER 4

FROM the mysterious wastes which lie far out on the ocean, the fog was again creeping stealthily across the bay and into the throbbing arteries of the great city. Through half-opened doors and windows it rolled like smoke, and piled like drifted snow against the mountains of brick and stone. Caught for a moment on a transient breeze, it swirled around a towering pile on lower Broadway, and eddied up to the windows of the Ketchim Realty Company, where it sifted through the chinks in the loose frames and settled like a pall over the dingy rooms within.

To Philip O. Ketchim, junior member of the firm, it seemed a fitting external expression of the heavy gloom within his soul. Crumpled into the chair at the broad table in his private office, with his long, thin legs stretched out before him, his hands crammed into the pockets of his trousers, and his bullet-shaped head sunk on his flat chest, until it seemed as if the hooked nose which graced his hawk-like visage must be penetrating his breast-bone, the man was the embodiment of utter dejection. On the littered table, where he had just tossed it, lay the report of Reed and Harris on the pseudo-mineral properties of the Molino Company—the "near-mines" in the rocky cañon of the far-off Boque. Near it lay the current number of a Presbyterian review, wherein the merits of this now moribund project were advertised in terms whose glitter had attracted swarms of eager, trusting investors.

The firm name of Ketchim Realty Company was something of a misnomer. The company itself was an experiment, whose end had not justified its inception. It had been launched a few years previously by Douglass Ketchim to provide business careers for his two sons, James and Philip. The old gentleman, still hale and vigorous, was one of those sturdy Englishmen who had caught the infection of '49 and abruptly severed the ties which bound them to their Kentish homes for the allurements of the newly discovered El Dorado of western America. Across the death-haunted Isthmus of Panamá and up the inhospitable Pacific coast the indomitable spirit of the young adventurer drove him, until he reached the golden sands of California. There he toiled for many years, until Fortune at

length smiled upon his quenchless efforts. Then he tossed aside his rough tools and set out for the less constricted fields of the East.

He invested his money wisely, and in the course of years turned it several times. He became a banker. He aspired to the hand of a sister of a railway president, and won it. He educated his sons in the best colleges of the East, and then sent them to Europe on their honeymoons. And finally, when the burden of years began to press noticeably, and the game became less attractive, he retired from the field of business, cleared off his indebtedness, organized the Ketchim Realty Company, put its affairs on the best possible basis, and then committed the unpardonable folly of turning it over to the unrestricted management of his two sons.

The result was chaos. At the expiration of a year the old gentleman hurried back into the harness to save the remnant of his fortune, only to find it inextricably tied up in lands of dubious value and questionable promotional schemes. The untangling of the real estate he immediately took into his own hands. The schemes he left to his sons.

A word in passing regarding these sons, for they typify a form of parasitical growth, of the fungus variety, which in these days has battened and waxed noxious on the great stalk of legitimate commercial enterprise. They were as dissimilar, and each as unlike his father, as is possible among members of the same family. Both sought, with diligent consecration, the same goal, money; but employed wholly different means to gain that end. James, the elder, was a man of ready wit, a nimble tongue, and a manner which, on occasions when he could think of any one but himself, was affable and gracious. He was a scoffer of religion, an open foe of business scruple, and the avowed champion of every sort of artifice and device employed in ancient, mediaeval, or modern finance to further his own selfish desires, in the minimum of time, and at whatever cost to his fellow-man. In his cups he was a witty, though arrogant, braggart. In his home he was petulant and childish. Of real business acumen and constructive wisdom, he had none. He would hew his way to wealth, if need be, openly defiant of God, man, or the devil. Or he would work in subtler ways, through deceit, jugglery, or veiled bribe. But he generally wore his heart on his sleeve; and those who perforce had business relations with him soon discovered that, though utterly unscrupulous, his character was continuously revealed through his small conceit, which caused him so to work as to be seen of men and gain their cheap plaudits for his sharp, mendacious practices.

Philip retained a degree of his father's confidence—which James wholly lacked—and he spared himself no pains to cultivate it. Though far less ready of wit than his stubby, bombastic brother, he was a tenacious plodder, and was for this reason much more likely ultimately to achieve his sordid purposes. His energy was tireless, and he never admitted defeat. He never worked openly; he never appeared to have a decided line of conduct; and no one could ever say what particular course he intended to pursue. Apparently, he was a man of exemplary habits; and his mild boast that he knew not the taste of tobacco or liquor could not be refuted. He was an elder in the Presbyterian church in the little suburb where he lived, and superintendent of its Sunday school. His prayers were beautiful expressions of reverent piety; and his conversation, at all times chaste and modest, announced him a man of more than ordinary purity of thought and motive. While it is true that no one could recall any pious deed, any charitable act, or any conduct based on motives of self-abnegation and brotherly love performed by him, yet no one could ever point to a single coarse or mean action emanating from the man. If there was discord in company affairs, the wanton James always bore the onus. And because of this, relations between the brothers gradually assumed a condition of strain, until at length James openly and angrily denounced Philip as a hypocrite, and refused longer to work with him. Thereupon the milder Philip offered the other cheek and installed a mediator, in the person of one Rawlins, a sickly, emaciated, bearded, but loyal Hermes, who thenceforth performed the multifold functions of pacificator, go-between, human telephone, and bearer of messages, documents, and what-not from one to the other for a nominal wage and the crumbs that dropped from the promoter's table.

The fog and the gloom thickened, and Ketchim sat deeply immersed in both. He was still shaking from the fright which he had received that morning. On opening the door as he was about to leave his house to take the train to the city, he had confronted two bulky policemen. With a muffled shriek he had slammed the door in their astonished faces and darted back into the house, his heart in his throat and hammering madly. How could he know that they were only selling tickets to a Policemen's Ball? Then he had crept to the window and, concealed in the folds of the curtain, had watched them go down the street, laughing and turning often to glance back at the house that held such a queer-mannered inmate.

Rousing himself from the gloomy revery into which he had lapsed, Ketchim switched on the light and took up again the

report of Reed and Harris. Sullenly he turned its pages, while the sallow skin on his low forehead wrinkled, and his bird-like face drew into ugly contortions.

"Fools!" he muttered. "Didn't they see that clause in their contract, providing an additional fifty thousand in stock for them in case they made a favorable report?"

A light tap at the door, and a low cough, preceded the noiseless entrance of the meek-souled Rawlins.

"A—a—this is the list which Reverend Jurges sent us—names and addresses of his congregation. I've mailed them all descriptive matter; and I wrote Mr. Jurges that the price of his stock would be five dollars, but that we couldn't sell to his congregation for less than seven. That's right, isn't it? I told him Molino stock would go up to par next month. That's what you said, I believe."

"How much stock did Jurges say he'd take?" demanded Ketchim, without looking up.

"Why, he said he could only get together two thousand dollars at present, but that later he would have some endowment insurance falling due—"

"How soon?"

"About a year, I think he said."

"Well, he ought to be able to borrow on that. Did you write him so?"

"No—but I can."

"Do so—but only hint at it. And tell him to send his check at once for the stock he has agreed to take."

"Why, he sent that some days ago. I thought you—"

"He did?" cried Ketchim, his interest now fully aroused. "Well, where is it?"

"Er—your brother James received the letter, and I believe he put the check in his pocket."

Ketchim gave vent to a snort of rage. "You tell James," he cried, pounding the desk with his fist, "that as president and treasurer of the Molino Company I demand that check!"

"Yes, sir—and—"

"Well?"

"Mr. Cass 'phoned before you got down this morning. He said the bank refused to extend the time on your note."

Ketchim sank back limply into his chair, and his face became ashen.

"And here is the mail," pursued the gentle Hermes, handing him a bundle of letters.

Ketchim roused himself with an effort. His eyes flashed angrily. "Do you know whether James has been selling any of his own Molino stock?" he asked.

"I—I believe he has, sir—a little."

"Humph! And how much?"

"He sold some two hundred shares yesterday—I believe; to a Miss Leveridge."

"Leveridge? Who's she? What did he get for it?"

"Why, the Leveridge children—grown men and women now—have just sold their farm down state; and Mr. James saw the sale announced in the papers. So he got in touch with Miss Alvina Leveridge. I believe he sent Houghton down there; and he closed a deal. Mr. James got eight dollars a share, I believe."

"You believe! You *know*, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," meekly.

Ketchim gulped down his wrath, and continued:

"How much did the Leveridges get for their farm? And why didn't you inform me of the sale?" he demanded, fixing the humble Rawlins with a cold eye.

"A—a—twenty-five thousand dollars, sir, I believe. And I didn't see the notice until—"

"As usual, James saw it first! An excellent scout you are! Twenty-five thousand dollars! How many acres?"

"A hundred and eighty, I believe."

Ketchim reflected. "James is still dickering with Miss Leveridge, I suppose?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Nezlett got back last night, didn't he? Very well, call him up and tell him to get ready to go at once to—wherever the Leveridges live. And—I want to see him right away!"

He abruptly dismissed the factotum and turned to his mail. As his glance fell upon the pile he gasped. Then he quickly drew out a letter and tore it open. His thin lips moved rapidly as his eyes roved over the paper. He laid the letter down and looked wildly about. Then he took it up again and read aloud the closing words:

"—and, having bought somewhat heavily of Molino stock, and believing that your representations were made with intent to deceive, I shall, unless immediate reparation or satisfactory explanation is made, take such steps as my counsel may advise. Yours, etc.,

"J. WILTON AMES."

Congealing with fear, Ketchim took his stock memorandum from a drawer and consulted it. "He put in ten thousand, cash," he murmured, closing the book and replacing it. "And I always wondered why, for he doesn't go into things that he can't control. There's where I was a fool! He shouldn't have been sold a dollar's worth! He knows we can't return the money; and now he's tightening the screws! He has something up his sleeve; and we've fallen for it!"

He settled back in his chair and groaned aloud. "Why did he buy? Did he think he'd reach Uncle Ted through us? By Jove! that's it! For a year or more he's wanted to oust Uncle from the C. & R., and now he thinks by threatening the family with disgrace, and us fellows with the pen, he can do it! What fools we've been! Oh, if I ever get out of this I'll steer clear of these deals in the future!" It was his stock resolution, which had never borne fruit.

The door opened slightly, and the noiseless Rawlins timidly announced the arrival of Reed and Harris.

"Show them in at once!" cried Ketchim, jumping up and hastily passing his hands over his hair and face. Then, advancing with a wan smile, he courteously greeted the callers.

"Well, fellows," he began, waving them to seats, "it looks a little bad for Molino, doesn't it? I've just been reading your report—although of course you told me over the 'phone yesterday that there was no hope. But," he continued gravely, and his face grew serious, "I'm glad, very glad, of one thing, and that is that there are men in the world to-day who are above temptation."

"Which means—?" queried Harris.

"Why," continued Ketchim, smiling pallidly, "the little joker that James inserted in the contract, about your getting fifty thousand in the event of a favorable report. I told him it didn't look well—but he said it would test you. He would be funny, though, no matter how serious the business. But you showed that you were men."

Harris snickered; but Reed turned the conversation at once. "We have been studying how we could help you pull the thing out of the fire. Suppose you give us," he suggested, "a little of Molino's history. Then perhaps something may occur to us."

"There isn't much to tell," replied Ketchim gloomily. "The mines were located by a man named Lakes, at one time acting-Consul at Cartagena. He is half Colombian, I believe. He came up to New York and interested Bryan, Westler, and some others, and they asked us to act as fiscal agents."

"But you never had title to the property," said Reed.

"Certainly we have the title! Why do you say that?"

"Because, on our way down the Magdalena river we made the acquaintance of a certain Captain Pinal, of the Colombian army. When he learned that we were mining men he told us he had a string of rich properties that he would like to sell. I inquired their location, and he said they lay along the Boque river. And I learned that he had clear title to the property, too—Molino's mines. Now you have sold some three or four

hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock on alleged mines to which you never had even the shadow of a claim!"

"But—" murmured Ketchim weakly, "we thought we had. We acted in good faith—we took Mr. Lakes's word—and we showed our confidence and sincerity by purchasing machinery to operate—"

"Oh, the machinery went down there, all right!" ejaculated Harris with a laugh. "I judge it was designed to manufacture barrel staves, rather than to extract gold! Lakes had it shipped to Cartagena; rented part of an old woman's house; dumped the machinery in there; and now she's wild. Can't get her pay from you for storing the machinery; and can't sell the stuff, nor move it. So there she sits, under some six or eight tons of iron junk, waiting for the Lord to perform a miracle!"

Ketchim smiled feebly. "It's too bad!" he murmured. "But Molino has no funds—"

"You are still selling stock, aren't you?" demanded Reed.

"Oh, no!" quickly returned Ketchim. "We would not sell any more stock until we received your report—and not then, unless the report were favorable. That would not have been right!"

Reed eyed him narrowly. But the image of truth sat enthroned upon Ketchim's sharp features.

"It is unfortunate, boys," the promoter continued dejectedly. "But I care nothing for my own losses; it's the poor stockholders I am thinking about. I would do anything to relieve them. I've prayed to be led to do right. What would you suggest?"

"I suggest," blurted out Harris, "that, having already relieved them considerably, you'll soon be wearing a striped suit!"

The last trace of color faded from Ketchim's face, but the sickly smile remained. "I'd wear it, willingly, if by so doing I could help these poor people," he mournfully replied.

"Well," pursued Harris, "it'll help some when they learn that you're in one."

"Boys," said Ketchim suddenly, quite disregarding the insinuation, "to-morrow is Sunday, and I want you both out to dinner with me, and we will talk this all over. Then in the afternoon I want you to come over and see my little Sunday school. Fellows," he continued gravely, "I've prayed for you and for your success every day since you left. And my faith in my Saviour is too great to be shattered now by your adverse report. He certainly will show us a way out; and I can trust him and wait."

Reed and Harris looked at him and then at each other with

puzzled expressions on their faces. The man continued earnestly:

"Colombia is a rich and undeveloped country, you have said. There must be other mineral properties available there. Did you see none on your travels? Or could we not organize an exploration party to search for mines?"

"Who'd furnish the wherewithal?" asked Harris bluntly.

"Oh, that could be arranged."

"Will your sheep stand for further shearing?" queried the grinning Harris.

"Fellows," said Ketchim, brightening and drawing his chair closer, "you've got something—I know it! You've got something to suggest that will save the Molino stockholders!"

"But not yourself, eh?" taunted Harris.

"I shall sacrifice myself," answered Ketchim deprecatingly. His manner had now become animated, and he leaned expectantly toward them.

Reed and Harris again looked questioningly at each other. "I guess we might as well," said Reed in a low voice. "It is bound to come out, anyway."

"Sure," returned Harris; "drive ahead."

"Mr. Ketchim," began Reed, turning to the eager, fidgeting man, "when I came to New York a year ago, looking for a business opening, my friend and former classmate in the University, Mr. Cass, put me in touch with you. At that time you were booming the Molino company hard, and, I have no doubt, thought you really had something down in Colombia. But when you offered to lease me a portion of your properties there, I laughed at you. And, in the course of time, I succeeded in convincing you that you knew nothing whatsoever about the properties on which you were selling so much stock. Then, after months of parley, from an offer to permit me to go down to Colombia at my own expense to examine Molino's mines, to ascertain whether or not I wished to operate a part of them on a royalty basis, you adopted my own view, namely, that the time had come for you to know whether the company possessed anything of value or not. And so you sent my associate, Mr. Harris, and myself down there to examine and report on Molino's so-called mines. And you gave us each a block of stock as part compensation. We found the mines barren. And now you have got to face a body of stockholders from whom you have lured thousands of dollars by your misrepresentations. From talks with your salesmen, I am convinced that this body of stockholders is made up chiefly of widows and indigent clergymen."

"Which of my salesmen told you that?" interrupted Ketchim heatedly.

"Let us waive that," replied Reed calmly. "The fact is, you are in a hard way just at present, is it not so?"

"Fellows," said Ketchim, with an air of penitent humility, "the officers and stockholders of the Molino Company have been grossly deceived and unfortunately—"

"All right," interrupted Reed, "we'll pass that. But Harris and I have played square with you. And we are going to continue to do so, and to offer you a possible opportunity to do something for your poor stockholders, and incidentally for yourself and us. The fact is, we do know of another property down there, but we haven't the title—"

"That makes no difference!" interrupted Ketchim. "I mean, it can be acquired—" striving to restrain his eagerness.

"That's just the question," replied Reed. "The title is at present vested in a young Colombian girl, who, unfortunately, is lost. This girl came up to the States with us—"

"Ha!" exclaimed Ketchim, unable longer to hold himself. "Then you broke your contract, for that stipulated that whatever you might acquire there should belong to me! I engaged your services, remember!"

"I believe," put in Harris dryly, "we were employed by the Molino company."

"But my mother advanced the funds to send you down there!" cried Ketchim.

"How about the poor stockholders?" queried Harris, with an insinuating grin.

"I'm speaking for the stockholders, of course," said Ketchim, subsiding. "But, proceed, please."

"There is no likelihood that this poor girl will ever be heard of again," continued Reed. "Nor is it likely that the title papers, which she has with her, will be of any use to those into whose hands she has fallen. Her old foster-father held the title to this mine, but transferred it to the girl, stipulating that she and I should divide a large interest in the stock of a company formed to develop and operate it. For my share, I agreed to bring the young girl to the States and place her in a school, at my own expense." He went on to relate the manner in which Carmen had been lost, and then continued: "Of course, the title to this mine is registered in Cartagena, and in the girl's name, as the old man gave me power to have that change made. But, now that she is gone, the property naturally reverts to him."

"We will relocate it!" declared Ketchim impatiently.

"No, that wouldn't be right to the old man," returned Reed. "But, it might be that the property could now be secured from him. He is old and penniless, and without any further interest

in life. It is a bare chance, but we might prevail upon him to join us in the formation of a company to take over his mine, La Libertad."

"Is that the name of it?" asked Ketchim, reaching for a writing pad. "Spell it for me, please. And the name of the old man."

Reed complied, and then continued: "Now, Mr. Ketchim, we are living strictly up to the letter of our contract by giving you this information. It would require not less than one hundred thousand dollars, cash in hand, to acquire that mine, develop it, make trails, and erect a stamp-mill. Mr. Harris and I are in no condition financially to advance or secure such an amount."

"It is barely possible," mused Harris, "that my father and Uncle John could do something."

"We don't have to call upon them!" cried Ketchim. "Your interest, Mr. Reed, in this mine already belongs to Molino, as you were acting under contract with us—"

"I have covered that point, Mr. Ketchim," replied Reed evenly. "But the time has come for us all to put our shoulders to the wheel, act fairly with one another, help the Molino stockholders, and at the same time make good ourselves. Mr. Harris and I have barely entered upon our business careers, and we have come to New York to establish ourselves. This may afford the opportunity. We know where this mine is—we know the old man, and may be able to influence him. To forestall possible complications, we should begin negotiations with him at once. But—remember—everything must be done in the name of the company, not in your own name. And Mr. Harris and I must personally negotiate with the old man, and receive a very liberal compensation for our work."

"Certainly!" cried the excited Ketchim. "Goodness, fellows! why didn't you tell me this yesterday over the 'phone, and save me a night of torment? But I forgive you. Gracious! Rawlins," he said, addressing that individual, who had entered in response to the buzzer, "'phone Cass to come right over. And tell Miss Honeywell to give you ten dollars for our lunch, and charge it to Molino. It's company business. By Jove, fellows! this is a happy day for me. Since the old man gave you a share in the mine, Molino has property, after all!"

"Has it to get," amended Harris dubiously.

"Oh, we'll get it!" cried Ketchim, rubbing his hands gleefully. "But now while waiting for Cass, tell me more about your trip. It is wonderful! And so romantic!"

In the midst of the ensuing recital, Cass was announced; and Ketchim, after detailing to him the previous conversation,

launched into the project which had been developing in his own mind while Reed had been describing his experiences in the South.

"What we want is another organization, fellows," he said in conclusion, "to take over the tottering Molino; purchase its assets with stock; give Molino stockholders an opportunity to get in on the ground floor, and so on. We'll let Molino die in the arms of a new company, eh?"

"But one with a somewhat wider scope," suggested Cass, with an air of importance. "A sort of general development company, to secure La Libertad, if possible; prospect for other mineral properties; and develop the resources of the country."

"Just so," assented Ketchim, with increasing enthusiasm. "A company to go in for coffee, cotton—you say you saw wild cotton, didn't you, fellows? Great! And cocoanuts, timber, cattle—in fact, we'll get concessions from the Colombian Government, and we'll—"

"Just rip things wide open, eh?" finished Harris.

"That's it!" cried Ketchim radiantly. "Uncle Ted has influence at Washington, with the Pan American Union, and so on—why, we can get anything we want! Ames and the bank will both cool down—by Jove, this is great!"

"But where's the cold and vulgar cash coming from to oil the wheels?" put in the practical Harris.

"Oh, I can sell the stock," replied Ketchim. "Then, too, there's the Molino stockholders; why, I'll bet there's hardly one that wouldn't be able to scrape up a few dollars more for the new company! By the way, what'll we call it? Give us a name, somebody."

"I'd call it the Salvation Company," drawled Harris, "as it is likely to delay your trip to Sing Sing."

A general laugh, in which Ketchim joined heartily, followed the remark.

"I suggest we call it the Simití Development Company," said Cass, after a moment's dignified reflection.

"Great!" cried Ketchim. "It has a prosperous ring! And now its capitalization? We must make it big!"

"Hem!" returned Cass. "If these gentlemen can acquire that mine, I think I would capitalize for, say, about three millions." He went to the desk and made some calculations. "I assume," he continued somewhat pompously after a few moments' figuring, "that you wish to retain me, and that I am to take my compensation in stock?"

Ketchim quickly assented. He knew that Cass had correctly concluded that in no other way was he likely to be reimbursed. And, at best, it was only a hazard, a wild gamble. In fact, it

was a last desperate chance. Moreover, stock was always available; while cash was a rare commodity.

"Suppose, then," continued the sapient young lawyer, "that we capitalize for three millions; set aside one million, five hundred and one thousand as treasury stock, to be sold to raise money for development purposes; transfer to the Ketchim Realty Company one million, as compensation for acting as fiscal agents of the new company; transfer to these two gentlemen, as part compensation for past and future services, the sum of four hundred thousand in stock; give to the stockholders of the Molino Company the sum of fifty-nine thousand in stock for all the assets, machinery, good will, *et cetera*, of that company; and to me, for services to be rendered, forty thousand dollars' worth of the stock. All of us shall agree not to sell any of our personal holdings of stock until the company shall be placed upon a dividend-paying basis. And Mr. Reed, or Mr. Harris, or both, will return to Colombia immediately to relocate the mine and prepare for its development, while the Ketchim Realty Company at once endeavor to sell the treasury stock."

Having delivered himself of this comprehensive plan, Cass settled back in his chair and awaited remarks.

"Well," observed Ketchim at length, "that's all right—only, I think we should be allowed to sell our personal stock if we wish. Of course," with a deprecating wave of his hand, "there isn't the slightest likelihood of our ever wanting to do that—with a mine such as you have described, fellows. But—why hedge us about?"

"Not one dollar's worth of your stock shall you be permitted to sell!" cried Harris, bringing his fist down upon the desk.

"I suggest that we leave that for the Directors to decide later," offered Cass, anxious to avoid discord. He was young, scarcely out of the twenties, just married, just admitted to the bar, and eager to get a toe-hold in the world of business. "And now," he concluded, "if agreeable to you, I will put this through at once, organize the company, and get the charter. You gentlemen will return to Colombia as soon as Mr. Ketchim can provide the necessary funds."

"Mr. Harris and I have formed an engineering partnership," said Reed. "As such, we will handle the affairs of the new company in Colombia. Mr. Harris will proceed to that country, while I go to California to open a copper mine which we have taken over there. In time I will relieve Mr. Harris in the South. Now, Mr. Ketchim, what can you do?"

"I'll send Houghton and Nezlett out on the road to-morrow. Rawlins has just told me of one prospect, a bully one! We don't need to wait for the papers from Albany before going

ahead. But we find it costs about forty-eight cents to sell a dollar's worth of stock, and so some time will be needed to raise enough to send Mr. Harris back to Colombia—unless," he added, eying Harris furtively, "he will advance us the amount of his own expenses—"

"Which he will not!" retorted Harris warmly. "I haven't it, anyway. Nor has Reed. We're both broke."

"There's a revolution on down there now," said Reed, "and we'd better go easy for a while. Besides, Harris needs time to study the language. But, are we all agreed on the terms? Salary for Harris while in Colombia to be settled later, of course."

"It's all satisfactory, I think," said Ketchim, smiling happily. "The details can be worked out anon—Molino stockholders' meeting, and so on."

"Then," said Reed, rising, "we will consider the new company launched, to take over the defunct Molino and to operate on a comprehensive scale in Colombia, beginning with the development of La Libertad, if we can secure it."

At that moment Rawlins opened the door and peered in. "A gentleman to see Mr. Reed," he announced softly; "a priest, I believe."

Harris sprang to his feet. The door swung open, and Father Waite entered with Carmen.

With a glad cry the girl dropped her bundle and bounded into the arms of the astonished Harris. Reed grasped the priest's hand, and begged him to speak. Ketchim and the young lawyer looked on in perplexity.

"I was unable to find your name in the city directory, Mr. Reed," explained the priest, his face beaming with happiness. "But at police headquarters I found that you had made inquiries, and that detectives were searching for the girl. I learned that you were living with your wife's sister, and that you had no business address, having just come up from South America. So I telephoned to your sister-in-law, and your wife informed me that you had an appointment this morning at this office. I therefore came directly here with the girl, who, as you see, is safe and sound, but with an additional interesting experience or two to add to the large fund she already possessed." He looked down at Carmen and smiled. "And now," he concluded, laughing, as he prepared to depart, "I will not ask for a receipt for the child, as I see I have several witnesses to the fact that I have delivered her to the proper custodian." He bowed and went to the door.

"Wait!" cried Reed, seizing him by the hand. "We want to thank you! We want to know you—"

"I will give you my card," replied the priest. "And I would be very happy, indeed, if some time again I might be permitted to see and talk with the little girl." He handed his card to Reed; then nodded and smiled at Carmen and went out.

"By Jove!" sputtered Harris, pushing the girl aside and making after him. But he was too late. The priest had already caught a descending elevator, and disappeared. Harris returned to the bewildered group. "I guess that knocks the Simití Company sky-high," he exclaimed, "for here is the sole owner of La Libertad!"

Ketchim collapsed into a chair, while Reed, saying that he would keep his dinner engagement with Ketchim on the following day, picked up Carmen's precious bundle and, taking her hand, left the room. "I am going home," he called back to Harris; "and you be sure to come up to the house to-night. We'll have to readjust our plans now."

CHAPTER 5

"REED," said Harris the following day, as they sat in the dusty, creaking car that was conveying them to their dinner appointment with Ketchim, "who is this Ames that Ketchim referred to yesterday?"

The men were not alone, for Carmen accompanied them. Reed was reluctantly bringing her at the urgent request received from Ketchim over the telephone the previous evening. But the girl, subdued by the rush of events since her precipitation into the seething American world of materialism, sat apart from them, gazing with rapt attention through the begrimed window at the flying scenery, and trying to interpret it in the light of her own tenacious views of life and the universe. If the marvels of this new world into which she had been thrown had failed to realize her expectations—if she saw in them, and in the sense of life which they express, something less real, less substantial, than do those who laud its grandeur and power to charm—she gave no hint. She was still absorbing, sifting and digesting the welter of impressions. She had been overpowered, smothered by the innovation; and she now found her thoughts a tangled jumble, which she strove incessantly to unravel and classify according to their content of reality, as judged by her own standards.

"Why, Ames," replied Reed, turning a watchful eye upon Carmen, "is a multimillionaire financier of New York—surely you have heard of him! He and his clique practically own the

United States, and a large slice of Europe. For some reason Ames bought a block of Molino stock. And now, I judge, Ketchim would give his chances on eternal life if he hadn't sold it to him. And that's what's worrying me, too. For, since Ames is heavily interested in Molino, what will he do to the new company that absorbs it?"

"There isn't going to be any new company," asserted Harris doggedly.

"There's got to be!" cried Reed. "Ketchim holds us strictly to our contract. Our negotiations with old Rosendo were made while in the employ of Molino. It wouldn't be so bad if we had only Ketchim to deal with. We've got the goods on him and could beat him. But here enters Ames, a man of unlimited wealth and influence. If he wants La Libertad, he's going to get it, you mark me! Where we fell down was in ever mentioning it to Ketchim. For if we don't come over now he will lay the whole affair before Ames. He told me over the 'phone last night that he was badly in debt—that Ames was pressing him—that many of the Molino stockholders were making pertinent inquiries. Oh, he quite opened his heart! And yesterday I saw on his desk a letter from Ames. I can imagine what it contained. Ketchim would sacrifice us and everything else to keep himself out of Ames's grip. We're in for it, I tell you! And all because we were a bit too previous in believing that the girl had disappeared for good."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harris, "but doesn't it sound like a fairy-tale, the way Carmen got back to us?"

"And here I am," continued Reed, with a gesture of vexation, "left with the girl on my hands, and with a very healthy prospect of losing out all around. My wife said emphatically last night that she wouldn't be bothered with Carmen."

"Well, she won't bother you. Send her away to school."

"Fine! Good idea!" replied Reed sarcastically. "But do you realize that that involves expense? I'm a comparatively poor man, just getting a start in my profession, and with a young and socially ambitious wife!"

"But—your wife—er, she's going to—to have money some day, isn't she?"

"Very true. But the grim reaper has a little work to do first. And on occasions like this he's always deucedly deliberate, you know. Meantime, we're skating close to the edge—for New Yorkers."

"Well, we may be able to beat Ketchim. Now, my father and Uncle John—"

"Oh, shoot your father and Uncle John!" snapped Reed impatiently.

The conductor opened the door and bawled a cryptical announcement.

"This is the place," said Reed, starting up and making for the door. "And now you rake your thought for some way to deal with Ketchim. And leave your father and Uncle John entirely out of the conversation!"

Ketchim was just bowing out a caller as the young engineers mounted the steps. "See that fellow!" he exclaimed, after giving them a hearty welcome. "I just sold him a hundred shares of Simití stock, at five dollars a share—just half of par. Beginning right on the jump, eh?"

"But—" protested Harris, as they entered the spacious parlor, "the company isn't even in existence yet—and hasn't an asset!"

"Oh, that's all right," replied Ketchim easily. "It's coming into existence, and will have the grandest mine in South America! Boys," he went on earnestly, "I've been talking over the 'phone with Mr. Ames, our most influential stockholder, and a very warm friend of mine. I told him about our conversation of yesterday. He says, go right ahead with the new company—that it's a great idea. He's satisfied with his present holding, and will not increase it. Says he wants Molino stockholders to have the opportunity to purchase all the treasury stock, if they want to."

"Decidedly magnanimous," returned Reed. "But—what about the basis of organization of the new company?"

"Leave it as we planned it, he says. He thinks the arrangement and division of stock fine!"

Reed and Harris looked at each other questioningly. It did not seem possible.

"But," went on Ketchim, "have you seen the morning papers? They are full of the revolution in Colombia. The country is torn wide open, and reports say nothing can be done down there until peace is restored—and that may take a year or two. But, meantime, we will go ahead and organize the new company and take over Molino and prepare to begin work just as soon as you fellows can get into that country. Everybody has simply got to wait until then. And so this," going to Carmen and taking her hand, "is the wonderful little girl! Well! well!"

The entrance of Mrs. Ketchim and her troop of children at this juncture interrupted the conversation. "All enthusiastic Simití stockholders," said Ketchim, waving his hand toward them, after the introductions. "And all going to get rich out of it, too—as well as yourselves, boys. It simply shows how Providence works—one with God is a majority, always."

Carmen glanced up at him wonderingly.

Dinner over, the men were left alone. Carmen had been taken upstairs by the children to the nursery.

"I've got myself slated for the presidency of the new company," said Ketchim, plunging again into the subject nearest his heart; "and I think we'd better put brother James in as vice-president. Perfectly safe," looking at Harris and winking. "He's got to be recognized, you know, since the Ketchim Realty Company act as fiscal agents. Now for directors I've put down Judge Harris, your father—that's to assure you boys that there'll be some one to look after your interests. Then we'll say Reverend Jurges for another. He's got a big congregation and will be able to place a lot of stock. You just ought to see the letter he wrote me about selling stock to his people! You'd never believe he was a good, spiritually-minded clergyman, with an eye single to heavenly riches! Then one of you fellows, say Reed, had better go on the directorate, since Harris will be in Colombia in charge of operations. And—well, Cass, too. He's young and immature, but absolutely square. He'll do all the legal work for his stock interest. We save money that way, see?"

"But what do I do while we are waiting?" asked Harris in some perplexity. "Reed goes to California right away, you know."

"That's all right, old man," Ketchim genially assured him. "The new company will be organized at once—this week, if possible. You go on salary from the moment of its incorporation, and you open your office right here in this building. I'll see that the rent is paid until you go back to Colombia. Everything's arranged, and you turn right in and help Cass with the new company. There'll be plenty to do. You've got to prepare circulars; write boosting letters to stockholders and prospects; follow up leads; and—oh, you'll be busy! But here comes Reverend Coles," looking out of the window as a man came up the steps. "He's interested in some projects I've been exploiting. Just excuse me for a few moments."

He hastened out to greet the visitor and conducted him into a back room. Reed and Harris were left to the contemplation of their own mixed thoughts. Presently Harris, whose eyes had been dilating for some moments, broke out in a hoarse whisper: "Listen! God a'mighty!—he's praying!"

He got up softly and approached the door of the room into which Ketchim had taken his caller. In a few minutes he returned to his chair. "By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I could see Ketchim through the keyhole, on his knees by the bed, praying with that fellow! Now what the d—!"

Reed held up a warning finger. Through the silence that

fell upon them snatches of the prayer being offered in the adjoining room floated to their ears—"O, blessed Saviour, vouchsafe prosperity to our venture, we beseech thee! The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof—we ask thy blessing on these efforts of ours to wrest from the ground the wealth which the Father of lights has deposited there for the benefit of His children—"

Harris snickered aloud. "What's the game?" he whispered.

Reed shook his head in warning. "It may not be a game," he replied. "But if it is, it's an old one, hiding behind the mask of religion. But I'm inclined to believe the man sincere."

"And I'm not!" retorted Harris. "I'd rather deal with his brother. I know James to be an out-and-out rascal—he openly flies the black flag. But this pious fellow—well, he's got me guessing!"

The caller soon departed, and Ketchim again joined the young men. "He's our assistant pastor," he said musingly, as he watched the man go down the walk. "Nice young fellow, waiting for a church. He and some of his friends are interested in a zinc mine we've been floating, down in the Joplin district."

"Got titles?" queried the cynical Harris, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, yes," Ketchim smiled affably.

"Mine producing?"

"Well, no—not yet. Lots of development work to be done, you know. Always is. And there's a lot of water in this mine."

"And in the stock, too, eh?" pursued the cruel Harris. "Got any ore?"

"We haven't struck the deposit yet, although we expect to soon. But," glancing up at the clock on the mantel, "we'll have to be going over to Sunday school now. And I want that little girl to go with Marjorie. Fellows," the man's face became deeply serious, "I have no doubt you are both church members?"

Reed fidgeted uneasily under Ketchim's searching glance; but Harris frankly met the question. "Nope," he asserted, "we're both rank heathen. And I'm a dyed-in-the-wool atheist."

"Gracious!" cried Ketchim, "how can you say that, when you see the goodness of the Lord on every hand?"

"Reed, I believe," continued the imperturbable Harris, waving a hand toward his friend, "has philosophical leanings—New Thought, Subliminal Consciousness, Power in Silence, and all that. But I've got to be shown."

"But surely you believe in the divinity of the Christ?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I never gave it much thought," said Harris. "Been pretty busy, you know. Lots of time for that later."

"Ah, that's what so many say," replied Ketchim sadly; "and then comes the awful voice of the Lord, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee!' Fellows, I want to pray for you; and I want you both to promise me that you will take up seriously the consideration of your souls' welfare. It's too grave a subject for jest," addressing himself solemnly to the grinning Harris.

"All right, old man," laughed Harris. "But don't dig up any Presbyterian tracts for me. I've got a living witness to—well, to something out of the ordinary, in that girl, Carmen, and I'm inclined to believe she's dug nearer to bottom facts than any of you. So when I'm ready to discuss my soul's welfare I'll just consult her, see?"

"That reminds me," said Ketchim, turning abruptly to Reed, "what do you intend to do with the girl?"

"*Quien sabe?*" Reed answered abstractedly. "Send her to a boarding school, I guess. At least, that's what I told the old man I'd do."

"So you said before," Ketchim returned. "But where?"

"Don't know yet."

"Well, let me make a suggestion. My daughter Marjorie leaves Tuesday for Conway-on-the-Hudson, where she has been attending Madam Elwin's Select School for Girls. Suppose you go with her—I'm too busy, myself—and take Carmen. It's only a few hours' ride by boat down the river. And the school is without equal. This is Marjorie's third year there, and she's simply in love with it."

Reed began to show signs of interest; and Ketchim, noting the effect of his words, went on briskly:

"Now look here, Molino owes its salvation, and the new company its existence, to that girl. Why shouldn't they do something to show their gratitude? I say, it is no more than right that the new company should support her while she is in school."

"By Jove! not a half-bad idea," commented Harris.

"Certainly not," continued Ketchim earnestly. "Now fix up everything with her as regards the transfer of the mine to the new company, and then let her go with Marjorie to the Elwin school. We can, if you like, make some agreement with her to the effect that when the company is on its feet and she is receiving dividends, she shall return what it may advance for her schooling, eh?"

"You'd better accept the suggestion, Reed," put in Harris. "I'll be here, you know, to keep an eye on the girl; and I'll take her and Marjorie down to Conway myself, and attend to getting her located right."

Reed continued to reflect. He was hardly in a position to refuse such an offer. Besides, he was really leaving her in charge of Harris. "Well," he said at length, "in that case I could leave for California to-morrow night. That matter is pressing hard—all right, I accept the company's offer. It's no more than is due the girl, anyway."

"Good!" replied Ketchim. "I'll make the necessary arrangements at once. And now let's go over to church."

Thus it was that two days later Carmen, still wondering if she was dreaming, was enrolled in the Elwin Select School for Girls, with Marjorie Ketchim for roommate; while Reed, on the Overland Limited, hurrying to the far West, was musing dubiously at frequent intervals on Ketchim's rather conflicting statements, which, until left to this enforced leisure, he had not had time to try to reconcile. At the same time, while Harris was loudly declaiming to the gracious Madam Elwin on the astonishing mental prowess of the girl, Ketchim and Cass sat deeply immersed in the tentative plans for the newly-projected Simití Development Company.

"Now listen," said Ketchim, who for some minutes had been quietly scanning his youthful lawyer, "Ames knows nothing about the formation of this company, but Harris and Reed are not to know that; and we're going to keep Ames in ignorance of all our plans. With the first sales of stock—and they've already begun—we'll return him his Molino investment. Nezlett wired me this morning that he's sure to sell a big block to the Leveridges, that they're mightily interested, and want to meet Carmen. We'll use the girl for just such purposes. That's one reason why I wanted her handy, so's we could reach her at any time. She makes a star impression; and with her as an advertisement we'll sell a million dollars' worth of stock, and no trouble at all! She's got that honest look that's convincing. And she can tell a story that beats the Arabian Nights! Ames has given me a week to explain, or make good his investment. By that time we'll have the Leveridges sold for twice his investment, and we'll just pay him off and remove him. Meantime, you go over to the bank in the morning and put up the best line of talk you're capable of. I've got sixteen hundred dollars to give 'em on that note; and that'll secure more time, until the sales of stock are enough to pay it all up. Perhaps Uncle Ted will advance me enough to take up the note when he hears about La Libertad. And, say, you see brother James, and shake the club over him until he disgorges that check he got from Miss Leveridge. You can hand him a scare that he won't get over. By George, old man! things have taken a great turn, eh? Why, I can just see Simití stock sales humping these

next few months. Oh, Miss Honeywell," calling to his cashier, "bring me five dollars, please, and charge it to Molino—I mean, to Simití. Make a new account for that now." Then, again addressing Cass: "Come with me to the football game this afternoon. We can discuss plans there as well as here. Gee whiz, but I feel great!"

CHAPTER 6

CARMEN'S rapid transition from the eternal solitudes of Guamocó to the whirring activities of New York was like a plunge into the maelstrom, and left her groping blindly in the effort to adapt herself to the changed order. There was little in her former mode of existence that could be transferred to her new environment, and she felt that she was starting life like a new-born babe. For days, even weeks, she moved about dreamily, absorbed, ceaselessly striving to orient herself and to accept easily and naturally the marvels, the sudden accession of material aids, and the wonders of this modern, complex civilization, so common to her associates, but scarcely even dreamed of by her in her former home, despite the preparation which José had tried to give her. The Elwin school was small, its student-body seldom numbering more than fifty, and in it Carmen found herself hedged about by restrictions which in a way were beneficial, in that they narrowed her environment and afforded her time for her slow adjustment to it.

But if these restrictions aided her, they also rendered the length of her stay in the school almost calculable. Little by little the girl saw the forces developing which she knew must effect her dismissal; little by little, as Madam Elwin's manner toward her became less gracious, and her schoolmates made fewer efforts to conceal from her the fact that she was not one of them, Carmen prepared for the inevitable. Six months after the girl's enrollment, Madam Elwin terminated her series of disparaging reports to Ketchim by a request that he come at once and remove his charge from the school.

"As I have repeatedly said, Mr. Ketchim, the girl is a paradox. And after these months of disappointing effort to instruct her, I am forced to throw up my hands in despair and send for you." Madam Elwin tapped nervously with a dainty finger upon the desk before her.

"But, if I may be permitted the question, what specific reasons have you, Madam, for—ah, for requesting her removal?" asked the very Reverend Dr. William Jurges, who, having

come up to the city to attend a meeting of the directors of the Simití company, had accepted Ketchim's invitation to first accompany him on his flying trip to Conway-on-the-Hudson, in response to Madam Elwin's peremptory summons.

"Because," replied that worthy personage with a show of exasperation, "I consider her influence upon the young ladies here quite detrimental. Our school, while non-sectarian, is at least Christian. Miss Carmen is not. Where she got her views, I can not imagine. At first she made frequent mention of a Catholic priest, who taught her in her home town, in South America. But of late she has grown very reserved—I might say, sullen, and talks but little. Her views, however, are certainly not Catholic. In her class work she has become impossible. She refuses to accept a large part of our instruction. Her answers to examination questions are wholly in accord with her peculiar views, and hence quite apart from the texts. For that reason she fails to make any grades, excepting in mathematics and the languages. She utterly refuses to accept any religious instruction whatsoever. She would not be called atheistic, for she talks—or used to at first—continually about God. But her God is not the God of the Scriptures, Dr. Jurges. She is a free-thinker, in the strictest sense. And as such, we can not consent to her remaining longer with us."

"Ah—quite so, Madam, quite so," returned the clergyman, in his unconsciously pompous manner. "Doubtless the child's thought became—ah—contaminated ere she was placed in your care. But—ah—I have heard so much from our good friend, Mr. Ketchim, regarding this young girl, that—ah—I should like exceedingly to see and talk with her—if it might be—ah—"

"Madam Elwin will arrange that, I am sure," interposed Ketchim. "Suppose," he suggested, addressing the lady, "we let him talk with her, while I discuss with you our recently acquired mine in South America, and the advisability of an investment with us."

"Certainly," acquiesced Madam Elwin, rising and pressing one of the several buttons in the desk. "Bring Miss Carmen," she directed, to the maid who answered the summons.

"Pardon me," interrupted Dr. Jurges; "but may I go to her? Ah—it would doubtless be less embarrassing for the child."

"Miss Carmen was in the chapel a few moments ago," volunteered the maid.

"Then take the doctor there," returned Madam Elwin, with a gesture of dismissal.

At the head of the stairway the mingled sounds of a human voice and the soft, trembling notes of an organ drifted through the long hall and fell upon the ears of the clergyman.

"Miss Carmen," said the maid, answering his unspoken thought. "She often comes up to the chapel and sings for hours at a time—alone. The chapel is down there," pointing to the end of the hall.

"Then—ah—leave me," said the doctor. "I will proceed alone."

The maid turned willingly and went below, while the man tiptoed to the chapel door. There he stopped and stood listening. The girl was singing in Spanish, and he could not understand the words. But they would have meant nothing to him then. It was the voice upon which they were borne that held him. The song was a weird lament that had come down to the children of Simití from the hard days of the *Conquistadores*. It voiced the untold wrongs of the Indian slaves; its sad, unvarying minor echoed their smothered moans under the cruel goad; on the plaintive melody of the repeated chorus their piteous cries were carried to heaven's deaf ears; their dull despair floated up on the wailing tones of the little organ, and then died away, as died the hope of the innocent victims of Spanish lust.

The reverend doctor had never heard a song of that kind before. Nor could he readily associate the voice, which again and again he could not distinguish from the flute-like tones of the organ, with the sordidness and grime of material, fleshly existence. He entered softly and took a seat in the shadow of a pillar. The clear, sweet voice of the young girl flowed over him like celestial balm. Song after song she sang. Some were dreamy bits and snatches in Spanish and English; others were sacred in character. He wondered deeply, as the girl mused over these; yet he knew not that they were her own compositions. Curiosity and uncertainty mastered him at length, and he got softly to his feet and moved away from the pillar, that he might see from what manner of being issued such unbroken harmony. But in his eagerness his foot struck a chair, and the sound echoed loudly through the room.

The music abruptly ceased, and the girl rose and looked over the organ at the intruder.

"I—I beg your pardon," said the clergyman, advancing in some embarrassment. "I was listening to your singing—uninvited, but none the less appreciative. I—"

"Wait, please!" cried the girl, hastily stooping over and fumbling with her shoes. The doctor laughed genially, as he grasped the situation.

"I took them off," she explained hurriedly. "I am not yet accustomed to them. I never wore shoes until I left Simití." Her face was scarlet, and she tried to cover her confusion with a little laugh.

The doctor stood staring at her, lost in admiration of the shapely figure, the heavy, curling hair, and the wonderfully expressive face. The girl quickly recovered her poise and returned him a frank smile.

"You wish to see me?" she said, after waiting in vain for him to begin.

"Ah—a—yes, certainly—that is, I beg your pardon," stammered the doctor. "I did request permission of Madam Elwin to make your acquaintance. We have heard so much about you. I am Doctor Jurges, an Episcopal clergyman." His sentences issued like blasts from an engine exhaust.

"I am Carmen Ariza," said the girl, extending her hand.

"Ah—quite so, quite so," blustered the doctor, clearing his throat noisily. "Let us be seated. Ah—ah—you have a remarkable voice. It gives evidence of careful cultivation."

"No," returned the girl simply. "It has never had any cultivation. It is natural for me to sing. And my poor organ-playing is what I have picked up myself these six months."

The man regarded her with amazement. "Remarkable!" he murmured.

The girl looked up into his face searchingly. "Why," she asked, "should every one up here think it remarkable when a human mind is clear enough to be a transparency for God?"

Had the roof fallen, the excellent doctor could have been no more startled. He cleared his throat violently again; then fumbled nervously in his pocket and drew out his glasses. These he poised upon the ample arch of his ecclesiastical nose, and through them turned a penetrating glance upon the girl.

"H'm! yes," said he at length; "quite so, quite so! And—ah—Miss Carmen, that brings us to the matter in question—your religious instruction—ah—may I ask from whom you received it?"

"From God," was the immediate and frank reply.

The clergyman started, but quickly recovered his equipoise.

"H'm! yes, quite so, quite so! All real instruction descendeth from above. But—your religious views—I believe they are not considered—ah—quite evangelical, are they? By your present associates, that is."

"No," she replied, with a trace of sadness in her tone. "But," looking up with a queer little smile, "I am not persecuting them for that."

"Oh, no," with a jerky little laugh. "Assuredly not! H'm! I judge the persecution has come from the other side, has it not?"

"We will not speak of that," she said quickly. "They do not understand—that is all."

"H'm! no, quite so—that is—ah—may I ask why you think they do not understand? May not you be in error, instead?"

"If that which I believe is not true," the girl replied evenly, "it will fail under the test of demonstration. Their beliefs have long since failed under such test—and yet they still cling jealously to them, and try to force them upon all who disagree with them. I am a heretic, Doctor."

"H'm—ah—yes, I see. But—it is a quite unfortunate characteristic of mankind to attribute one's views indiscriminately to the Almighty—and—ah—I regret to note that you are not wholly free from this error."

"You do not understand, I think," she quickly returned. "I put every view, every thought, every idea to the test. If good is the result, I know that the thought or idea comes from the source of all good, God. The views I hold are those which I have time and again tested—and some of them have withstood trials which I think you would regard as unusually severe." Her thought had rested momentarily upon her vivid experience in Banco, the dangers which had menaced her in distant Simití, and the fire through which she had passed in her first hours in Christian America, the land of churches, sects, and creeds.

"H'm!" the worthy doctor mused, regarding the girl first through his spectacles, and then over the tops of them, while his bushy eyebrows moved up and down with such comicality that Carmen could scarcely refrain from laughing. "H'm! quite so. Ah—suppose you relate to me some of the tests to which your views have been subjected."

"No," she returned firmly; "those experiences were only states of consciousness, which are now past and gone forever. Why rehearse them? They were human, and so, unreal. Why go back now and give them the appearance of reality?"

"Unreal! H'm—then you do not regard untoward experience as given us by God for the testing of our faith, I take it."

Carmen turned her head away with a little sigh of weariness. "I think," she said slowly, "I think we had better not talk about these things, Doctor. You are a preacher. Your views are not mine."

"Why—ah," blustered the clergyman, assuming a more paternal air, "we—ah—would not for a moment cause you embarrassment, Miss Carmen! But—in fact, Madam Elwin has—ah—expressed her disapproval of your views—your religious ideals, if I may put it so baldly, and she—that is—the good lady regrets—"

"She wishes to be rid of me, you mean, Doctor?" said the

girl, turning and stretching a mental hand to the sinking divine.

"H'm! well, hardly so—ah—so—"

"Doctor," said the girl calmly, "I know it, and I wish to go. I have been waiting only to see the way open. I do not wish to remain longer in an atmosphere where ignorance and false belief stifle all real progress."

The doctor turned another look of astonishment upon her. He had forgotten that he had not been talking with one of his own age. The fact suddenly pressed upon him. "How old are you?" he blurted.

Carmen could not help laughing. But if her clear mental gaze penetrated the ecclesiastical mask and surmounted the theological assumptions of her interlocutor, enabling her to get close to the heart of the man, she did not indicate it further. "I am nearly sixteen," was her only reply.

"Ah," he reflected, "just a child! My dear girl," he continued, laying a hand indulgently upon hers, "I will advise with Madam Elwin, and will endeavor to convince her that—ah—that your spiritual welfare, if I may so put it, requires that you be not turned adrift at this critical, transitorial period of your life. We must all be patient, while we strive to counteract the —ah—the pernicious teaching to which you were exposed before—ah—before becoming enrolled in this excellent school."

Carmen looked at him steadily for a moment before replying. There was something of pity in the expression of her beautiful face, of tender sympathy for those who seek the light, and who must some day find it, but whose progress is as yet hampered by the human mind's unreasoning adherence to the stepping-stones over which it has been passing through the dark waters of ignorance. "Then, Doctor," she said calmly, "you know what I have been taught?"

"Why—ah—yes—that is, vaguely. But—suppose you inform me briefly." He was beginning to be sensible of having passed judgment upon the girl without first according her a hearing.

"Well," she smiled up at him, "I have been taught the very hardest thing in the whole world."

"H'm, indeed! Ah, quite so—and that?"

"To think."

"To—ah—to think!" He again clutched at his mental poise. "Well, yes, quite so! But—ah—is it not the function of all our schools to teach us to think?"

"No," answered the girl decidedly; "not to teach us to think, but to cause us blindly to accept what is ignorantly called 'authority'! I find we are not to reason, and particularly

about religious matters, but to accept, to let those 'in authority' think for us. Is it not so? Are you not even now seeking to make me accept your religious views? And why? Because they are true? Oh, no; but because you believe them true—whether they are or not. Have you demonstrated their truth? Do you come to me with proofs? Do your religious views rest upon anything but the human mind's undemonstrated interpretation of the Bible? And yet you can not prove that interpretation true, even though you would force it upon such as I, who may differ from you."

"I—ah—" began the doctor nervously. But Carmen continued without heeding the interruption:

"Only yesterday Professor Bales, of the University, lectured here on 'The Prime Function of Education.' He said it was the development of the individual, and that the chief end of educational work was the promotion of originality. And yet, when I think along original lines—when I depart from stereotyped formulæ, and state boldly that I will not accept any religion, be it Presbyterian, Methodist, or Roman Catholic, that makes a God of spirit the creator of a man of flesh, or that makes evil as real as good, and therefore necessarily created and recognized by a God who by very necessity can not know evil—then I am accused of being a heretic, a free-thinker; and the authorities take steps to remove me, lest my influence contaminate the rest of the pupils!"

"H'm—ah—yes, quite so—that is—I think—"

"Do you, a preacher, think?" the girl went on hurriedly. "Or do you only *think* that you think? Do you still believe with the world that the passing of a stream of human thought, or a series of mental pictures, through your mentality constitutes *real* thinking? Do you believe that jumping from one human mental concept to another twenty-four hours a day constitutes thinking? Have you yet learned to distinguish between God's thoughts and their opposites, human thoughts? Do you know what Jesus taught? Have you a real, working, demonstrable knowledge of Christianity? Do you heal the sick, raise the dead, and preach the truth that sets men free from the mesmerism of evil? If so, then you are unevangelical, too, and you and I are both heretics, and we'd better—we'd better leave this building at once, for I find that the Inquisition is still alive, even in America!"

She stopped, and caught her breath. Her face was flushed, and her whole body quivered with emotion.

"The Inquisition! Why, my dear young lady, this is a Christian nation!"

"Then," said the girl, "you have still much to learn from the pagan nations that have gone before."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor, again adjusting his glasses that he might see her more clearly. "My dear child, you have been thinking too much, and too seriously."

"No, Doctor," she replied; "but you preachers have not been thinking enough, nor even half seriously. Oh," she went on, while her eyes grew moist, and ever and again her throat filled, "I had expected so much in this great country! And I have found so little—so little that is not wholly material, mechanical, and unreal! I had imagined that, with all your learning and progress, which Padre José told me about, you would know God much better than we in the darkened South. But your god is matter, machinery, business, gold, and the unreal things that can be bought with money. Some one wrote, in a recent newspaper, that America's god was 'mud and mammon!' What do I find the girls here in this school talking about but dress, and society, and the unreal, passing pleasures of the physical senses! Do they know God? No—nor want to! Nor do the preachers! There are religious services here every Sunday, and sermons by preachers who come down from the city. Sometimes a Baptist; sometimes a Presbyterian; and sometimes an Episcopalian, or a Methodist. What is the result? Confusion—religious confusion. Each has a different concept of God; yet they all believe Him the creator of a man of flesh and bones, a man who was originally made perfect, but who fell, and was then cursed by the good and perfect God who made him. Oh, what childish views for men to hold and preach! How could a good God create anything that could fall? And if He could, and did, then He knew in advance that the man would fall, and so God becomes responsible, not man. Oh, Doctor, is it possible that you believe such stuff? How can you! how can you! Is it any wonder that, holding such awful views, you preachers have no longer the power to heal the sick? Do you not know that, in order to heal the sick, one must become spiritually-minded? But no one who holds to the puerile material beliefs embraced in your orthodox theology can possibly be spiritual enough to do the works Jesus said we should all do if we followed him—really understood him."

"My dear child—you really are quite inconsistent—you—"

"Inconsistent! What a charge for an orthodox preacher to bring! Let us see: You say that the Scriptures teach that God made man in His image and likeness—the image and likeness of spirit. Very well. Spirit, God, is eternal, immortal. Then while He exists can His image fade away, or die? Can or would God cause it to do so? Can or would He destroy His own reflection? And could that image, always being like

Him, ever change, or manifest sin, or disease, or evil, unless God first manifested these things? And if God did manifest them, then, perforce, the image would *have* to do likewise. But, in that case, could God justly punish His image for faithfully reflecting its original? Consistent! Oh, it is you preachers, lacking sufficient spirituality to correctly interpret the Scriptures, who are wildly, childishly, ignorantly inconsistent!"

Carmen rose and faced the clergyman. "I did not mean to condemn you, Doctor," she said earnestly. "I wage no warfare with persons or things. My opposition is directed only against the entrenched human thought that makes men spiritually blind and holds them in the mesmeric chains of evil. I am young, as you reckon years, but I have had much experience in the realm of thought—and it is there that all experience is wrought out before it becomes externalized. I have told you, my teacher was God. He used as a channel a priest, who came years ago to my little home town of Simiti, in far-off Colombia. His life had been wrecked by holding to the belief of evil as a power, real and intelligent. He began to see the light; but he did not overcome fear sufficiently to make his demonstration and break the imaginary bonds which held him. He saw, but he did not prove. He will, some day. And, Doctor, you and everybody else will have to do the same. For, unless Jesus uttered the most malicious falsehoods ever voiced, every human being will have to take every step that he took, make every demonstration that he made, and prove all that he proved, before mortals will cease to consume with disease, perish miserably in accidents, and sink with broken lives into graves that do *not* afford a gateway to immortal life! My God is infinite, eternal, unchanging mind. The god of the preachers, judging from their sermons preached here, is a human, mental concept, embodying spirit and matter, knowing good and evil, and changing with every caprice of their own unstable mentalities. My religion is the Christianity of the Master, love. Oh, how this poor world needs it, yearns for it! The love that demonstrates the nothingness of evil, and drives it out of human experience! The love that heals the sick, raises the dead, binds up broken hearts! The love that will not quench the religious instincts of children, and falsely educate them to know all manner of evil; but that teaches them to recognize it for what it is, the lie about God, and then shows them how to overcome it, even as Jesus did. My God is truth. Is truth real? Ah, yes, you say. But error is the opposite of truth. Then can error, evil, be real? No, not if you will be consistent. Again, God is infinite. But God is spirit. Then all is spirit and spirit's manifestation—is it not true? What,

then, becomes of the evil that men hug to their bosoms, even while it gnaws into their hearts? It is the opposite of good, of mind, of truth, God. And the opposite of truth is supposition. Is it not so? And the supposition is—where? In your mentality. And you can put it out whenever you are willing to drop your ceremonials and your theories, and will open your mentality to truth, which will make you free, even as the Master said. That is my religion, Doctor. Those are the religious views which you have been sent by Madam Elwin to investigate. Am I a heretic? Or unevangelical?"

She waited a few moments for the doctor to reply. Then, as he remained silent, she went up to him and held out her hand.

"You do not care to talk with me longer, I think," she said. "Perhaps we may meet again. But, as regards Madam Elwin's wishes, you may tell her that I shall leave the school."

"Have you—have you been fitting yourself for any—ah—particular work—ah—for your support, that is?" inquired the doctor gravely, as he took the proffered hand. He had been swept off his feet by the girl's conversation, and he had not the temerity to combat her views.

"Yes," replied Carmen. "I have been working daily to gain a better understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and through them, of God. My single aim has been to acquire 'that mind which was in Christ Jesus.' And I have no other business than to reflect it to my fellow-men in a life of service. That is my Father's business, and I am working with Him. My mission in this world is to manifest God. I am going out now to do that, and *to show what love will do.* God will use me, and He will supply my every need. And now, good-bye."

She turned abruptly from him and went to the organ. Soon the same song which he had heard as he entered the room rose again through the stillness. A strong emotion seemed to possess him. He started toward the girl; checked himself; and stood hesitating. Then his lips set, and he turned and walked slowly from the room.

In the hall two women were approaching, and as they drew near he recognized one of them.

"Why," he exclaimed with enthusiasm, holding out both hands, "my dear Mrs. Hawley-Crowles! It is not so long since we met at the Weston's. But what, may I ask, brings you here?"

"This is my sister, Mrs. Charles Reed, Doctor Jurges. We have come to make a duty call on Mr. Reed's protégée, the little South American savage, you know. Madam Elwin said she was up here with you?"

"Ah, yes, quite so—er, in the chapel, I believe," said the clergyman, his face becoming suddenly grave. "I would return with you, but my time is—ah—so limited." He bowed low, with his hand in the breast of his long frock coat, and passed on down the hall.

As the women approached the door of the chapel through which came Carmen's low singing they turned and looked at each other inquiringly. Then they quietly entered the doorway and stood listening. Carmen, concealed behind the organ, did not see them.

The song stopped, and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles went quickly to the organ. Bending over it, she gazed down into the face of the startled girl. "My goodness!" she exclaimed. "Get up and let me see what sort of a looking creature you are."

Carmen rose, and Mrs. Reed came forward and gave her a tempered greeting. Then Mrs. Hawley-Crowles fell back and stared at the girl from head to foot. "You know," she said to her sister, "this is the first glimpse I've had of your husband's discovery. I was out of the city when he brought her to my house, you remember. But," turning again to Carmen, "sing that song over, dear, please—the one you were singing just now."

Carmen seated herself again at the organ, and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles drew her sister to the rear of the room. "It will sound better back here," she explained.

After the lapse of a few minutes she turned to Mrs. Reed. "Belle," she said, nodding her head sententiously, "you had a pearl, and you threw it away. That girl there is our social fortune! Her voice, and her face—why, with our ward—this beautiful, gifted, South American owner of a famous mine—as a lever, we can force the Beaubien to bring the Ames to our terms! She goes back with us to-night! You've been blind!"

Meantime, the dainty Madam Elwin and the amiable Doctor Jurges in the office below had reached a conclusion. "A young lady of—ah—invincible will," the doctor had observed; "and already—ah—decidedly mature, despite her tender years. Should she—ah—assume leadership over the pupils of your school, my dear Madam Elwin, the result might be disquieting. There can be no question as to her religious views, as I have said. But, what astonishes me is—ah—that this strange cult should have its devotees even in the wilds of tropical America! Astonishing—and so unfortunate! The girl is utterly—ah—unevangelical, Madam; and the advisability of removing her from the school can not be questioned. Do you not agree with me, Mr. Ketchim?"

"By all means," asserted the latter gentleman with great

seriousness, while his eyes dwelt tenderly upon Madam Elwin's written order for a hundred shares of Simiti stock which he held in his hand.

"Very well, then," said the lady with a determined nod of her head; "I shall request Mrs. Reed to take her to-day." Then, with a proper sense of what it meant to have the moral support of such an eminent divine as Doctor Jurges, she rang for her maid and bade her summon Mrs. Reed and the girl.

Thus it was that Carmen was again shifted a space on the checkerboard of life, and slept that night once more under the spacious roof of the wealthy relict of the late James Hawley-Crowles, on Riverside Drive.

CHAPTER 7

AS has been said, Carmen's six months in the Elwin school had been a period of slow adjustment to the changed order. She had brought into this new world a charm of unsophistication, an ingenuous *naïveté*, such as only an untrammeled spirit nourished in an elemental civilization like that of primitive Simiti could develop. Added to this was the zest and eagerness stimulated by the thought that she had come as a message-bearer to a people with a great need. Her first emotion had been that of astonishment that the dwellers in the great States were not so different, after all, from those of her own unprogressive country. Her next was one of sad disillusionment, as the fact slowly dawned upon her trusting thought that the busy denizens of her new environment took no interest whatsoever in her message. And then her joy and brilliant hopefulness had chilled, and she awoke to find her strange views a barrier between herself and her associates. She had brought to the America of the North a spirit so deeply religious as to know naught else than her God and His ceaseless manifestation. She had come utterly free of dogma or creed, and happily ignorant of decaying formularies and religious caste. Her Christianity was her demonstrable interpretation of the Master's words; and her fresh, ebulliant spirit soared unhampered in the warm atmosphere of love for mankind. Her concept of the Christ stirred no thought within her of intolerance toward those who might hold differing views; nor did it raise interposing barriers within her own mind, nor evoke those baser sentiments which have so sadly warped the souls of men into instruments of deadly hatred and crushing tyranny. Her spiritual vision, undimmed and world-embracing,

saw the advent of that day when all mankind would obey the commands of Jesus, and do the works which he did, even to the complete spiritualization and dematerializing of all human thought. And her burning desire was to hasten the coming of that glad hour.

The conviction that, despite its tremendous needs, humanity was steadily rejecting, even in this great land of opportunity and progress, the remedy for its consuming ills, came to her slowly. And with it a damping of her ardor, and a dulling of the fine edge of her enthusiasm. She grew quiet as the days passed, and drew away from her companions into her thought. With her increasing sense of isolation came at length a great longing to leave these inhospitable shores, and return to her native environment and the sympathy and tender solicitude of her beloved Rosendo and Padre José. But, alas! that was at present impossible. Indeed, she could not be certain now of their whereabouts. A great war was raging in Colombia, and she knew not what fate had befallen her loved ones. To her many letters directed to Simití there had come back no reply. Even Harris, who had written again and again to both Rosendo and José, had received no word from them in return. Corroding fear began to assail the girl; soul-longing and heart-sickness seized upon her; her happy smile faded; and her bright, bubbling conversation ceased.

Then one day, standing alone in her room, she turned squarely upon the foul brood of evil suggestions crowding upon her and, as if they were fell spirits from the nether world, bade them begone. "Listen!" she cried aloud. "I know you for what you are—*nothing!* You seemed to use Padre José, but you can't use me! God is everywhere—right here! He is my life; and you, evil thoughts, can't make me think He isn't! I am His image and likeness; I am His witness; and I will *not* witness to His opposite, evil! My life is filled with harmony; and you, evil thoughts, can't reverse that fact! God has brought me here, else I would not have come, for He is the cause of all that is. It is for me to stand and see His glory. No! no!" as she paced about the room and seemed to ward off the assaults of an invisible enemy, "there is no power apart from Him! On that I stand!"

Then, in the lull of battle, "Father divine, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And now I lay my all upon the altar of love, and throw myself upon Thy thought."

From that day, despite continued attacks from error—despite, too, the veiled slights and covert insinuations of her schoolmates, to whom the girl's odd views and utter refusal to share their accustomed conversation, their interest in mundane

affairs, their social aspirations and worldly ambitions, at length made her quite unwelcome—Carmen steadily, and without heed of diverting gesture, brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of her Christ-principle, and threw off for all time the dark cloud of pessimism which human belief and the mesmerism of events had drawn over her joyous spirit.

Mrs. Reed had not been near her since her enrollment in the school; but Ketchim had visited her often—not, however, alone, but always with one or more prospective purchasers of Simití stock in tow whom he sought to influence favorably through Carmen's interesting conversation about her native land. Harris came every Sunday, and the girl welcomed the great, blundering fellow as the coming of the day. At times he would obtain Madam Elwin's permission to take the girl up to the city on a little sight-seeing expedition, and then he would abandon himself completely to the enjoyment of her naïve wonder and the numberless and often piquant questions stimulated by it. He was the only one now with whom she felt any degree of freedom, and in his presence her restraint vanished and her airy gaiety again welled forth with all its wonted fervor. Once, shortly after Carmen had been enrolled, Harris took her to a concert by the New York Symphony Orchestra. But in the midst of the program, after sitting in silent rapture, the girl suddenly burst into tears and begged to be taken out. "I couldn't stand it!" she sobbed as, outside the door, she hid her tear-stained face in his coat; "I just couldn't! It was heavenly! Oh, it was God that we heard—it was God!" And the astonished fellow respected this sudden outburst of pent-up emotion as he led her, silent and absorbed, back to the school.

With the throwing of the girl upon her own thought came a rapid expansion of both mind and body into maturity, and the young lady who left the Elwin school that bright spring afternoon under the protection of the self-sufficient Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was very far from being the inquisitive, unabashed little girl who had so greatly shocked the good Sister Superior by her heretical views some six months before. The sophistication engendered by her intercourse with the pupils and instructors in the school had transformed the eager, trusting little maid, who could see only good, into a mature woman, who, though her trust remained unshaken, nevertheless had a better understanding of the seeming power "that lusteth against the spirit," and whose idea of her mission had been deepened into a grave sense of responsibility. She saw now, as never before, the awful unreality of the human sense of life; but she likewise understood, as never previously, its seeming reality in the human consciousness, and its terrible mesmeric power

over those materialistic minds into which the light of spirituality had as yet scarcely penetrated. Her thought had begun to shape a definite purpose; she was still to be a message-bearer, but the message must be set forth in her life conduct. The futility of promiscuous verbal delivery of the message to whomsoever might cross her path had been made patent. Jesus taught—and then proved. She must do likewise, and let her deeds attest the truth of her words. And from the day that she bade the suggestions of fear and evil leave her, she had consecrated herself anew to a searching study of the Master's life and words, if happily she might acquire "that mind" which he so wondrously expressed.

But the assumption of an attitude of quiet demonstration was by no means sudden. There were times when she could not restrain the impulse to challenge the beliefs so authoritatively set forth by the preachers and lecturers whom Madam Elwin invited to address her pupils, and who, unlike Jesus, first taught, and then relegated their proofs to a life beyond the grave. Once, shortly after entering the school, forgetful of all but the error being preached, she had risen in the midst of an eloquent sermon by the eminent Darius Borwell, a Presbyterian divine of considerable repute, and asked him why it was that, as he seemed to set forth, God had changed His mind after creating spiritual man, and had created a man of dust. She had later repented her scandalous conduct in sackcloth and ashes; but it did not prevent her from abruptly leaving the chapel on a subsequent Sunday when another divine, this time a complaisant Methodist, quite satisfied with his theories of endless future rewards and fiery punishments, dwelt at length upon the traditional idea that the sorrows of the world are God-sent for mankind's chastisement and discipline.

Then she gradually learned to be less defiant of the conventions and beliefs of the day, and determined quietly to rise superior to them. But her experience with the preachers wrought within her a strong determination henceforth to listen to no religious propaganda whatsoever, to give no further heed to current theological beliefs, and to enter no church edifice, regardless of the tenets of the sect worshiping within its precincts. The wisdom of this decision she left for the future to determine.

"Oh," she cried, "my only mission is to manifest the divine, not to waste time listening to the theories of ignorant preachers, who fail utterly to prove the truth of their teachings! Oh, how the world needs love—just love! And I am going to love it with the selfless love that comes from God, and destroys error and the false beliefs that become externalized in the

human consciousness as sickness, failure, old age, and death! Love, love, love—it is mankind's greatest need! Why, if the preachers only knew, the very heart and soul of Christianity is love! It is love that casts out fear; and fear is at the bottom of all sickness, for fear leads to belief in other gods than the one Father of Christ Jesus! Christianity is aflame with love! Oh, God—take me out into the world, and let me show it what love can do!"

And the divine ear heard the call of this beautiful disciple of the Christ—aye, had heard it long before the solicitous, fluttering little Madam Elwin decided that the strange girl's unevangelical views were inimical to the best interests of her very select school. The social ambitions of the wealthy Mrs. Hawley-Crowles threw wide the portals of the world to Carmen, and she entered, wide-eyed and wondering. Nor did she return until the deepest recesses of the human mind had revealed to her their abysmal hideousness, their ghastly emptiness of reality, and their woeful mesmeric deception.

CHAPTER 8

MRS. JAMES HAWLEY-CROWLES, more keenly perceptive than her sister, had seized upon Carmen with avidity bred of hope long deferred. The scourge of years of fruitless social striving had rendered her desperate, and she would have staged a ballet on her dining table, with her own ample self as *première danseuse*, did the attraction but promise recognition from the blasé members of fashionable New York's ultra conservative set. From childhood she had looked eagerly forward through the years with an eye single to such recognition as life's desideratum. To this end she had bartered both youth and beauty with calculated precision for the Hawley-Crowles money bags; only to weep floods of angry tears when the bargain left her social status unchanged, and herself tied to a decrepit old rounder, whose tarnished name wholly neutralized the purchasing power of his ill-gotten gold. Fortunately for the reputations of them both, her husband had the good sense to depart this life ere the divorce proceedings which she had long had in contemplation were instituted; whereupon the stricken widow had him carefully incinerated and his ashes tenderly deposited in a chaste urn in a mausoleum which her architect had taken oath cost more than the showy Ames vault by many thousands. The period of decorous mourning past, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles blithely doffed her weeds and threw

herself again into the terrific competition for social standing, determined this time that it should be a warfare to the death.

And so it bade fair to prove to her, when the eminent nerve specialist, Dr. Bascom Ross, giving a scant half hour to the consideration of her case, at the modest charge of one hundred dollars, warned her to declare a truce and flee to the Alps for unalloyed rest. She complied, and had returned with restored health and determination just as her sister came up from South America, bringing the odd little "savage" whom Reed had discovered in the wilds of Guamocó. A prolonged week-end at Newport, the last of the summer season, accounted for her absence from the city when Reed brought Carmen to her house, where he and his wife were making their temporary abode. Six months later, in her swift appraisal of the girl in the Elwin school, to whom she had never before given a thought, she seemed to see a light.

"It does look like a desperate chance, I admit," she said, when recounting her plans to her sister a day or so later. "But I've played every other card in my hand; and now this girl is going to be either a trump or a joker. All we need is a word from the Beaubien, and the following week will see an invitation at our door from Mrs. J. Wilton Ames. The trick is to reach the Beaubien. That I calculate to do through Carmen. And I'm going to introduce the girl as an Inca princess. Why not? It will make a tremendous hit."

Mrs. Reed was not less ambitious than her sister, but hitherto she had lacked the one essential to social success, money. In addition, she had committed the egregious blunder of marrying for love. And now that the honeymoon had become a memory, and she faced again her growing ambition, with a struggling husband who had neither name nor wealth to aid her, she had found her own modest income of ten thousand a year, which she had inherited from her mother, only an aggravation. True, in time her wandering father would pass away; and there was no doubt that his vast property would fall to his daughters, his only living kin. But at present, in view of his aggressively good health and disregard for his relatives, her only recourse was to attach herself to her wealthy, sharp-witted sister, and hope to be towed safely into the social swim, should that scheming lady ultimately achieve her high ambition.

Just why Mrs. Hawley-Crowles should have seen in Carmen a means of reaching a woman of the stamp of the Beaubien, and through her the leader of the most exclusive social set in the metropolis, is difficult to say. But thus does the human mind often seek to further its own dubious aims through guileless

innocence and trust. Perhaps Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had likewise a slight trace of that clairvoyance of wisdom which so characterized the girl. But with this difference, that she knew not why she was led to adopt certain means; while Carmen, penetrating externals, consciously sought to turn those who would employ her into channels for the expression of her own dominant thought. Be that as it may, the Beaubien was now the stone before the door of their hope, and Carmen the lever by which these calculating women intended it should be moved.

"The Beaubien, my dear," explained Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to her inquisitive sister, whose life had been lived almost entirely away from New York, "is J. Wilton Ames's very particular friend, of long standing. As I told you, I have recently been going through my late unpleasant husband's effects, and have unearthed letters and memoranda which throw floods of light upon Jim's early indiscretions and his association with both the Beaubien and Ames. Jim once told me, in a burst of alcoholic confidence, that she had saved him from J. Wilton's clutches in the dim past, and for that he owed her endless gratitude, as well as for never permitting him to darken her door again. Now I have never met the Beaubien. Few women have. But I dare say she knows all about us. However, the point that concerns us now is this: she has a hold on Ames, and, unless rumor is wide of the truth, when she hints to him that his wife's dinner list or yachting party seems incomplete without such or such a name, why, the list is immediately revised."

The position which the Beaubien held was, if Madam On-dit was not to be wholly discredited, to say the least, unique. It was not as social dictator that she posed, for in a great cosmopolitan city where polite society is infinitely complex in its make-up such a position can scarcely be said to exist. It was rather as an influence that she was felt, an influence never seen, but powerful, subtle, and wholly inexplicable, working now through this channel, now through that, and effecting changes in the social complexion of conservative New York that were utterly in defiance of the most rigid convention. Particularly was her power felt in the narrow circle over which Mrs. J. Wilton Ames presided, by reason of her own and her husband's aristocratic descent, and the latter's bursting coffers and supremacy in the realm of finance.

Only for her sagacity, the great influence of the woman would have been short-lived. But, whatever else might be said of her, the Beaubien was wise, with a discretion that was positively uncanny. Tall, voluptuous, yet graceful as a fawn; black, wavy, abundant hair; eyes whose dark, liquid depths

held unfathomable mysteries; gracious, affable, yet keen as a razor blade; tender, even sentimental on occasions, with an infinite capacity for either love or hate, this many-sided woman, whose brilliant flashes of wit kept the savant or roué at her table in an uproar, could, if occasion required, found an orphanage or drop a bichloride tablet in the glass of her rival with the same measure of calculating precision and disdain of the future. It was said of her that she might have laid down her life for the man she loved. It is probable that she never met with one worth the sacrifice.

While yet in short dresses she had fled from her boarding school, near a fashionable resort in the New Hampshire hills, with a French Colonel, Gaspard de Beaubien, a man twice her age. With him she had spent eight increasingly miserable years in Paris. Then, her withered romance carefully entombed in the secret places of her heart, she secured a divorce from the roistering colonel, together with a small settlement, and set sail for New York to hunt for larger and more valuable game.

With abundant charms and sang-froid for her capital, she rented an expensive apartment in a fashionable quarter of the city, and then settled down to business. Whether she would have fallen upon bad days or not will never be known, for the first haul of her widespread net landed a fish of supreme quality, J. Wilton Ames. On the plea of financial necessity, she had gone boldly to his office with the deed to a parcel of worthless land out on the moist sands of the New Jersey shore, which the unscrupulous Gaspard de Beaubien had settled upon her when she severed the tie which bound them, and which, after weeks of careful research, she discovered adjoined a tract owned by Ames. Pushing aside office boy, clerk, and guard, she reached the inner *sanctum* of the astonished financier himself and offered to sell at a ruinous figure. A few well-timed tears, an expression of angelic innocence on her beautiful face, a despairing gesture or two with her lovely arms, coupled with the audacity which she had shown in forcing an entrance into his office, effected the man's capitulation. She was then in her twenty-fourth year.

The result was that she cast her net no more, but devoted herself thenceforth with tender consecration to her important catch. In time Ames brought a friend, the rollicking James Hawley-Crowles, to call upon the charming Beaubien. In time, too, as was perfectly natural, a rivalry sprang up between the men, which the beautiful creature watered so tenderly that the investments which she was enabled to make under the direction of these powerful rivals flourished like Jack's beanstalk, and she was soon able to leave her small apartment and take a suite but a few blocks from the Ames mansion.

At length the strain between Ames and Hawley-Crowles reached the breaking point; and then the former decided that the woman's bewitching smiles should thenceforth be his alone. He forthwith drew the seldom sober Hawley-Crowles into certain business deals, with the gentle connivance of the suave Beaubien herself, and at length sold the man out short and presented a claim on every dollar he possessed. Hawley-Crowles awoke from his blissful dream sober and trimmed. But then the Beaubien experienced one of her rare and inexplicable revulsions of the ethical sense, and a compromise had to be effected, whereby the Hawley-Crowles fortune was saved, though the man should see the Beaubien no more.

By this time her beauty was blooming in its utmost profusion, and her prowess had been fairly tried. She took a large house, furnished it like unto a palace, and proceeded to throw her gauntlet in the face of the impregnable social caste. There she drew about her a circle of bon-vivants, artists, littérateurs, politicians, and men of finance—with never a woman in the group. Yet in her new home she established a social code as rigid as the Median law, and woe to him within her gates who thereafter, with or without intent, passed the bounds of respectful decorum. His name was heard no more on her rosy lips.

Her dinners were Lucullan in their magnificence; and over the rare wines and imperial cigars which she furnished, her guests passed many a tip and prognostication anent the market, which she in turn quietly transmitted to her brokers. She came to understand the game thoroughly, and, while it was her heyday of glorious splendor, she played hard. She had bartered every priceless gift of nature for gold—and she made sure that the measure she received in return was full. Her gaze was ever upon the approaching day when those charms would be but bitter memories; and it was her grim intention that when it came silken ease should compensate for their loss.

Ten years passed, and the Beaubien's reign continued with undimmed splendor. In the meantime, the wife of J. Wilton Ames had reached the zenith of her ambitions and was the acknowledged leader in New York's most fashionable social circle. These two women never met. But, though the Beaubien had never sought the entrée to formal society, preferring to hold her own court, at which no women attended, she exercised a certain control over it through her influence upon the man Ames. What Mrs. Ames knew of the long-continued relations between her husband and this woman was never divulged. And doubtless she was wholly satisfied that his

wealth and power afforded her the position which her heart had craved; and, that secure, she was willing to leave him to his own methods of obtaining diversion. But rumor was persistent, maliciously so; and rumor declared that the list of this envied society dame was not drawn up without the approval of her husband and the woman with whom his leisure hours were invariably spent. Hence the hope of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, whose doting mate had once fawned in the perfumed wake of the luxurious Beaubien.

Carmen, whose wishes had not been consulted, had voiced no objection whatever to returning to the Hawley-Crowles home. Indeed, she secretly rejoiced that an opportunity had been so easily afforded for escape from the stifling atmosphere of the Elwin school, and for entrance into the great world of people and affairs, where she believed the soil prepared for the seed she would plant. That dire surprises awaited her, of which she could not even dream, did not enter her calculations. Secure in her quenchless faith, she gladly accepted the proffered shelter of the Hawley-Crowles mansion, and the protection of its worldly, scheming inmates.

In silent, wide-eyed wonder, in the days that followed, the girl strove to accustom herself to the luxury of her surroundings, and to the undreamed of marvels which made for physical comfort and well-being. Each installment of the ample allowance which Mrs. Hawley-Crowles settled upon her seemed a fortune—enough, she thought, to buy the whole town of Simití! Her gowns seemed woven on fairy looms, and often she would sit for hours, holding them in her lap and reveling in their richness. Then, when at length she could bring herself to don the robes and peep timidly into the great pier glasses, she would burst into startled exclamations and hide her face in her hands, lest the gorgeous splendor of the beautiful reflection overpower her.

"Oh," she would exclaim, "it can't be that the girl reflected there ever lived and dressed as I did in Simití! I wonder, oh, I wonder if Padre José knew that these things were in the world!"

And then, as she leaned back in her chair and gave herself into the hands of the admiring French maid, she would close her eyes and dream that the fairy-stories which the patient José had told her again and again in her distant home town had come true, and that she had been transformed into a beautiful princess, who would some day go in search of the sleeping priest and wake him from his mesmeric dream.

Then would come the inevitable thought of the little newsboy of Cartagena, to whom she had long since begun to send

monetary contributions—and of her unanswered letters—of the war devastating her native land—of rudely severed ties, and unimaginable changes—and she would start from her musing and brush away the gathering tears, and try to realize that her present situation and environment were but means to an end, opportunities which her God had given her to do His work, with no thought of herself.

A few days after Carmen had been installed in her new home, during which she had left the house only for her diurnal ride in the big limousine, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles announced her readiness to fire the first gun in the attack upon the Beaubien. "My dear," she said to her sister, as they sat alone in the luxurious sun-parlor, "my washerwoman dropped a remark the other day which gave me something to build on. Her two babies are in the General Orphan Asylum, up on Twenty-third street. Well, it happens that this institution is the Beaubien's sole charity—in fact, it is her particular hobby. I presume that she feels she is now a middle-aged woman, and that the time is not far distant when she will have to close up her earthly accounts and hand them over to the heavenly auditor. Anyway, this last year or two she has suddenly become philanthropic, and when the General Orphan Asylum was building she gave some fifty thousand dollars for a cottage in her name. What's more, the trustees of the Asylum accepted it without the wink of an eyelash. Funny, isn't it?

"But here's the point: some rich old fellow has willed the institution a fund whose income every year is used to buy clothing for the kiddies; and they have a sort of celebration on the day the duds are given out, and the public is invited to inspect the place and the inmates, and eat a bit, and look around generally. Well, my washerwoman tells me that the Beaubien always attends these annual celebrations. The next one, I learn, comes in about a month. I propose that we attend; take Carmen; ask permission for her to sing to the children, and thereby attract the attention of the gorgeous Beaubien, who will be sure to speak to the girl, who is herself an orphan, and, ten to one, want to see more of her. The rest is easy. I'll have a word to say regarding our immense debt of gratitude to her for saving Jim's fortune years ago when he was entangled in her net—and, well, if that scheme doesn't work, I have other strings to my bow."

But it did work, and with an ease that exceeded the most sanguine hopes of its projector. On the day that the General Orphan Asylum threw wide its doors to the public, the Hawley-Crowles limousine rubbed noses with the big French car of the Beaubien in the street without; while within the building the

Beaubien held the hand of the beautiful girl whose voluntary singing had spread a veil of silence over the awed spectators in the great assembly room, and, looking earnestly down into the big, trusting, brown eyes, said: "My dear child, I want to know you." Then, turning to the eager, itching Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, "I shall send my car for her to-morrow afternoon, with your permission."

With her permission! Heavens! Mrs. Hawley-Crowles wildly hugged her sister and the girl all the way home—then went to bed that night with tears of apprehension in her washed-out eyes, lest she had shown herself too eager in granting the Beaubien's request. But her fears were turned to exultation when the Beaubien car drew up at her door the following day at three, and the courteous French chauffeur announced his errand. A few moments later, while the car glided purring over the smooth asphalt, Carmen, robed like a princess, lay back in the cushions and dreamed of the poor priest in the dead little town so far away.

CHAPTER 9

"SING it again, dear. I know you are tired, but I want to hear that song just once more. Somehow it seems to bring up thoughts of—of things that might have been." The Beaubien's voice sank to a whisper as she finished.

Carmen laughed happily and prepared to repeat the weird lament which had so fascinated the Reverend Doctor Jurges a few days before.

"I—I don't know why that song affects me so," mused the Beaubien, when the girl had finished and returned to the seat beside her. Then, abruptly: "I wish you could play the pipe-organ out in the hall. I put twelve thousand dollars into it, and I can't even play five-finger exercises on it."

"Twelve thousand dollars!" exclaimed Carmen, drawing a long breath, while her eyes dilated.

The woman laughed. "Would that buy your beloved Simiti?" she asked. "Well, you poor, unsophisticated girl, suppose we just go down there and buy the whole town. It would at least give me an interest in life. Do you think I could stand the heat there? But tell me more about it. How did you live, and what did you do? And who is this José? And are you really descended from the old Incas?"

They were alone in the darkened music room, and the soft-stepping, liveried butler had just set the tea table before them.

At one end of the long room a cheery fire snapped and crackled in the huge fireplace, tempering the sharpness of the early spring day and casting a ruddy glow upon the tapestried walls and polished floor in front, where dozed the Beaubien's two "babies," Japanese and Pekingese spaniels of registered pedigree and fabulous value. Among the heavy beams of the lofty ceiling grotesque shadows danced and flickered, while over the costly rugs and rare skins on the floor below subdued lights played in animated pantomime. Behind the magnificent grand piano a beautifully wrought harp reflected a golden radiance into the room. Everything in the woman's environment was softened into the same degree of voluptuousness which characterized her and the life of sybaritic ease which she affected.

From the moment Carmen entered the house she had been charmed, fascinated, overpowered by the display of exhaustless wealth and the rich taste exhibited in its harmonious manifestation. The Hawley-Crowles home had seemed to her the epitome of material elegance and comfort, far exceeding the most fantastic concepts of her childish imagination, when she had listened enraptured to Padre José's compelling stories of the great world beyond Simiti. But the gorgeous web of this social spider made even the Hawley-Crowles mansion suffer in comparison.

"And yet," said the amused Beaubien, when Carmen could no longer restrain her wonder and admiration, "this is but a shed beside the new Ames house, going up on Fifth Avenue. I presume he will put not less than ten millions into it before it is finished."

"Ten millions! In just a house!" Carmen dared not attempt to grasp the complex significance of such an expenditure.

"Why, is that such a huge amount, child?" asked the Beaubien, as accustomed to think in eight figures as in two. "But, I forget that you are from the jungle. Yet, who would imagine it?" she mused, gazing with undisguised admiration at the beautiful, animated girl before her.

Silence then fell upon them both. Carmen was struggling with the deluge of new impressions; and the woman fastened her eyes upon her as if she would have them bore deep into the soul of whose rarity she was becoming slowly aware. What thoughts coursed through the mind of the Beaubien as she sat studying the girl through the tempered light, we may not know. What she saw in Carmen that attracted her, she herself might not have told. Had she, too, this ultra-mondaine, this creature of gold and tinsel, felt the spell of the girl's great innocence and purity of thought, her righteousness? Or did

she see in her something that she herself might once have been—something that all her gold, and all the wealth of Ormus or of Ind could never buy?

"What have you got," she suddenly, almost rudely, exclaimed, "that I haven't?" And then the banality of the question struck her, and she laughed harshly.

"Why," said Carmen, looking up quickly and beaming upon the woman, "you have everything! Oh, what more could you wish?"

"You," returned the woman quickly, though she knew not why she said it. And yet, memory was busy uncovering those bitter days when, in the first agony of marital disappointment, she had, with hot, streaming tears, implored heaven to give her a child. But the gift had been denied; and her heart had shrunk and grown heavily calloused.

Then she spoke more gently, and there was that in her voice which stirred the girl's quick sympathy. "Yes, you have youth, and beauty. They are mine no longer. But I could part with them, gladly, if only there were anything left."

Carmen instantly rose and went swiftly to her. Forgetful of caste, decorum, convention, everything but the boundless love which she felt for all mankind, she put her arms about the worldly woman's neck and kissed her.

For a moment the Beaubien sat in speechless surprise. It was the only manifestation of selfless love that had ever come into her sordid experience. Was it possible that this was spontaneous? that it was an act of real sympathy, and not a clever ruse to win her from behind the mask of affection? Her own kisses, she knew, were bestowed only for favors. Alas! they drew not many now, although time was when a single one might win a brooch or a string of pearls.

The girl herself quickly met the woman's groping thought. "I'm in the world to show what love will do," she murmured; "and I love you." Had she not thus solved every problem from earliest childhood?

The Beaubien melted. Not even a heart of stone could withstand the solvent power of such love. Her head dropped upon her breast, and she wept.

"Don't cry," said Carmen, tenderly caressing the bepowdered cheek. "Why, we are all God's children; we all have one another; you have me, and I have you; and God means us all to be happy."

The Beaubien looked up, wondering. Her variegated life included no such tender experience as this. She had long since ceased to shed aught but tears of anger. But now—

She clutched the girl to her and kissed her eagerly; then

gently motioned her back to her chair. "Don't mind it," she smiled, with swimming eyes, and a shade of embarrassment. "I don't know of anything that would help me as much as a good cry. If I could have had a daughter like you, I should —but never mind now." She tried to laugh, as she wiped her eyes.

Then an idea seemed to flash through her jaded brain, and she became suddenly animated. "Why—listen," she said; "don't you want to learn the pipe-organ? Will you come here and take lessons? I will pay for them; I will engage the best teacher in New York; and you shall take two or three a week, and use the big organ out in the hall. Will you?"

Carmen's heart gave a great leap. "Oh!" she exclaimed, her eyes dancing. "But I must ask Mrs. Reed, you know."

"I'll do it myself," returned the woman with growing enthusiasm. "William," she directed, when the butler responded to her summons, "get Mrs. Hawley-Crowles on the wire at once. But who is coming, I wonder?" glancing through the window at an automobile that had drawn up at her door. "Humph!" a look of vexation mantling her face, "the Right Reverend Monsignor Lafelle. Well," turning to Carmen, "I suppose I'll have to send you home now, dear. But tell Mrs. Hawley-Crowles that I shall call for you to-morrow afternoon, and that I shall speak to her at that time about your music lessons. William, take Monsignor into the morning room, and then tell Henri to bring the car to the porte-cochère for Miss Carmen. Good-bye, dear," kissing the bright, upturned face of the waiting girl. "I wish I could—but, well, don't forget that I'm coming for you to-morrow."

That afternoon Mrs. Hawley-Crowles directed her French tailor to cable to Paris for advance styles. Twenty-four hours later she hastened with outstretched arms to greet the Beaubien, waiting in the reception room. Oh, yes, they had heard often of each other; and now were so pleased to meet! New York was such a whirlpool, and it was so difficult to form desirable friendships. Yes, the Beaubien had known the late-lamented Hawley-Crowles; but, dear! dear! that was years and years ago, before he had married, and when they were both young and foolish. And—

"My dear Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, chance enabled him and me to be mutually helpful at a time when I was in sore need of a friend; and the debt of gratitude is not yours to me, but mine to your kind husband."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles could have hugged her on the spot. What cared she that her husband's always unsavory name had been linked with this woman's? She had married the

roistering blade for his bank account only. Any other male whose wealth ran into seven figures would have done as well, or better.

And Carmen? Bless you, no! To be sure, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles gratefully accepted the use of the organ and the Beaubien mansion for the girl; but she herself insisted upon bearing the expense of the lessons. Carmen had wonderful musical talent. Together, she and the Beaubien, they would foster and develop it. Moreover, though of course this must follow later, she intended to give the girl every social advantage befitting her beauty, her talents, and her station.

And then, when the Beaubien, who knew to a second just how long to stay, had departed, taking Carmen with her, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles turned to her sister with her face flushed with anger. "Did you see that?" she exclaimed, while hot tears suffused her eyes. "The hussy went away actually laughing at me! What do you suppose she's got up her sleeve? But, let me tell you, she'll not fool me! I'll slap that arrogant Ames woman yet; and then, when I've done that, I'll give the Beaubien something to think about besides the way she did up poor old Jim!"

* * * * * *

There was now but one cloud that cast its dark shadow across the full splendor of Carmen's happiness, the silence that shrouded Simití. But Harris was preparing to return to Colombia, and his trip promised a solution of the mystery of her unanswered letters. For weeks Carmen had struggled to teach him Spanish, with but small measure of success. The gift of tongues was not his. "You'll have to go back with me and act as interpreter," he said one day, when they were alone in the Hawley-Crowles parlor. Then a curious light came into his eyes, and he blurted, "Will you?"

But the girl turned the question aside with a laugh, though she knew not from what depths it had sprung. Harris shrugged his broad shoulders and sighed. He had not a hundred dollars to his name.

Yet he had prospects, not the least of which was the interest he shared with Reed in La Libertad. For, despite the disturbed state of affairs in Colombia, Simití stock had sold rapidly, under the sedulous care of Ketchim and his loyal aids, and a sufficient fund had been accumulated to warrant the inauguration of development work on the mine. A few years hence Harris should be rich from that source alone.

Reed was still in California, although the alluring literature which Ketchim was scattering broadcast bore his name as consulting engineer to the Simití Development Company. His

wife had continued her temporary abode in the Hawley-Crowles mansion, while awaiting with what fortitude she could command the passing of her still vigorous father, and the results of her defiant sister's assaults upon the Ames set.

Carmen's days were crowded full. The wonderful organ in the Beaubien mansion had cast a spell of enchantment over her soul, and daily she sat before it, uncovering new marvels and losing herself deeper and deeper in its infinite mysteries. Her progress was commensurate with her consecration, and brought exclamations of astonishment to the lips of her now devoted Beaubien. Hour after hour the latter would sit in the twilight of the great hall, with her eyes fastened upon the absorbed girl, and her leaden soul slowly, painfully struggling to lift itself above the murk and dross in which it had lain buried for long, meaningless years. They now talked but little, this strange woman and the equally strange girl. Their communion was no longer of the lips. It was the silent yearning of a dry, desolate heart, striving to open itself to the love which the girl was sending far and wide in the quenchless hope that it might meet just such a need. For Carmen dwelt in the spirit, and she instinctively accepted her splendid material environment as the gift, not of man, but of the great divine Mind, which had led her into this new world that she might be a channel for the expression of its love to the erring children of mortals.

She came and went quietly, and yet with as much confidence as if the house belonged to her. At first the Beaubien smiled indulgently. And then her smile became a laugh of eager joy as she daily greeted her radiant visitor, whose entrance into the great, dark house was always followed by a flood of sunshine, and whose departure marked the setting in of night to the heart-hungry woman. In the first days of their association the Beaubien could turn easily from the beautiful girl to the group of cold, scheming men of the world who filled her evenings and sat about her board. But as days melted into weeks, she became dimly conscious of an effort attaching to the transition; and the hour at length arrived when she fully realized that she was facing the most momentous decision that had ever been evolved by her worldly mode of living. But that was a matter of slow development through many months.

Meantime, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles trod the clouds. A week after Carmen began the study of the organ she boldly ventured to accompany her one day to the Beaubien citadel. She was graciously received, and departed with the Beaubien's promise to return the call. Thereupon she set about revising her own social list, and dropped several names which she now felt could serve her no longer. Her week-end at Newport, just

prior to her visit to the Elwin school, had marked the close of the gay season in the city, and New York had entered fully upon its summer *siesta*. Even the theaters and concert halls were closed, and the metropolis was nodding its weary head dully and sinking into somnolence. It was exactly what Mrs. Hawley-Crowles desired. The summer interim would give her time to further her plans and prepare the girl for her social *début* in the early winter. "And Milady Ames will be mentioned in the papers next day as assisting at the function—the cat!" she muttered savagely, as she laid aside her revised list of social desirables.

But in preparing Carmen that summer for her subsequent entry into polite society Mrs. Hawley-Crowles soon realized that she had assumed a task of generous proportions. In the first place, despite all efforts, the girl could not be brought to a proper sense of money values. Her eyes were ever gaping in astonishment at what Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her sister regarded as the most moderate of expenditures, and it was only when the Beaubien herself mildly hinted to them that ingenuousness was one of the girl's greatest social assets, that they learned to smile indulgently at her wonder, even while inwardly pitying her dense ignorance and lack of sophistication.

A second source of trial to her guardians was her delicate sense of honor; and it was this that one day nearly sufficed to wreck their standing with the fashionable Mrs. Gannette of Riverside Drive, a pompous, bepowdered, curled and scented dame, anaemic of mind, but tremendously aristocratic, and of scarcely inferior social dignity to that of the envied Mrs. Ames. For, when Mrs. Gannette moved into the neighborhood where dwelt the ambitious Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, the latter was taken by a mutual acquaintance to call upon her, and was immediately received into the worldly old lady's good graces. And it so happened that, after the gay season had closed that summer, Mrs. Gannette invited Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her sister to an informal afternoon of bridge, and especially requested that they bring their young ward, whose beauty and wonderful story were, through the discreet maneuvers of her guardians, beginning to be talked about. For some weeks previously Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had been inducting Carmen into the mysteries of the game; but with indifferent success, for the girl's thoughts invariably were elsewhere engaged. On this particular afternoon Carmen was lost in contemplation of the gorgeous dress, the lavish display of jewelry, and the general inanity of conversation; and her score was pitiably low. The following morning, to her great astonishment, she received a bill from the practical Mrs. Gannette for ten dollars to cover

her losses at the game. For a long time the bewildered girl mused over it. Then she called the chauffeur and despatched him to the Gannette mansion with the money necessary to meet the gambling debt, and three dollars additional to pay for the refreshments she had eaten, accompanying it with a polite little note of explanation.

The result was an explosion that nearly lifted the asphalt from the Drive; and Carmen, covered with tears and confusion, was given to understand by the irate Mrs. Hawley-Crowles that her conduct was as reprehensible as if she had attacked the eminent Mrs. Gannette with an axe. Whereupon the sorrowing Carmen packed her effects and prepared to depart from the presence of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, to the terrified consternation of the latter, who alternately prostrated herself before the girl and the offended Mrs. Gannette, and at length, after many days of perspiring effort and voluminous explanation, succeeded in restoring peace.

When the Beaubien, who had become the girl's confidante, learned the story, she laughed till her sides ached. And then her lips set, and her face grew terribly hard, and she muttered, "Fools!" But she smiled again as she gathered the penitent girl in her arms, and kissed her.

"You will learn many things, dearie, before you are through with New York. And," she added, her brow again clouding, "you *will* be through with it—some day!"

That evening she repeated the story at her table, and Gannette, who happened to be present, swore between roars of laughter that he would use it as a club over his wife, should she ever again trap him in any of his numerous indiscretions.

Again, the girl's odd views of life and its meaning which, despite her efforts, she could not refrain from voicing now and then, caused the worldly Mrs. Hawley-Crowles much consternation. Carmen tried desperately to be discreet. Even Harris advised her to listen much, but say little; and she strove hard to obey. But she would forget and hurl the newspapers from her with exclamations of horror over their red-inked depictions of mortal frailty—she would flatly refuse to discuss crime or disease—and she would comment disparagingly at too frequent intervals on the littleness of human aims and the emptiness of the peacock-life which she saw manifested about her. "I don't understand—I can't," she would say, when she was alone with the Beaubien. "Why, with the wonderful opportunities which you rich people have, how can you—oh, how can you toss them aside for the frivolities and littleness that you all seem to be striving for! It seems to me you must be mad—*loco!* And I know you are, for you are simply mesmerized!"

Then the Beaubien would smile knowingly and take her in her arms. "We shall see," she would often say, "we shall see." But she would offer no further comment.

Thus the summer months sped swiftly past, with Carmen ever looking and listening, receiving, sifting, in, but not of, the new world into which she had been cast. In a sense her existence was as narrowly routined as ever it had been in Simití, for her days were spent at the great organ, with frequent rides in the automobile through the parks and boulevards for variation; and her evenings were jealously guarded by Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, whose policy was to keep the girl in seclusion until the advent of her formal introduction to the world of fashionable society, when her associates would be selected only from the narrow circle of moneyed or titled people with whom alone she might mingle. To permit her to form promiscuous acquaintances now might prove fatal to the scheming woman's cherished plans, and was a risk that could not be entertained. And Carmen, suppressing her wonder, and striving incessantly to curb her ready tongue, accepted her environment as the unreal expression of the human mind, and submitted—and waited.

CHAPTER 10

THE chill blasts had begun to swoop down from the frozen North, and summer had gathered her dainty robes about her and fled shivering before them. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles stood at a window and gazed with unseeing eyes at the withered leaves tossing in the wind.

Carmen's sixteenth birthday was past by some months; the gay season was at hand; and the day was speeding toward her which she had set for the girl's formal *début*. Already, through informal calls and gatherings, she had made her charming and submissive ward known to most of her own city acquaintances and the members of her particular set. The fresh, beautiful girl's winning personality; her frank, ingenuous manner; her evident sincerity and her naïve remarks, which now only gave hints of her radical views, had opened every heart wide to her, and before the advent of the social season her wonderful story was on everybody's tongue. There remained now only the part which the woman had planned for the Beaubien, but which, thus far, she had found neither the courage nor the opportunity to suggest to that influential woman. Gazing out into the deserted street, she stamped her ample foot in sheer vexation. The Beaubien had absorbed Carmen; had been politely

affable to her and her sister; had called twice during the summer; and had said nothing. But what was there for her to say? The hint must come from the other side; and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles could have wept with chagrin as she reflected gloomily on her own timorous spirit.

But as she stood in dejection before the window a vague idea flitted into her brain, and she clutched at it desperately. Carmen had spoken of the frequent calls of a certain Monsignor Lafelle at the Beaubien mansion, although the girl had never met him. Now why did he go there? "Humph!" muttered Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. "Old Gaspard de Beaubien was a French Catholic."

But what had that to do with Carmen? Nothing—except—why, to be sure, the girl came from a Catholic country, and therefore was a Catholic! Mrs. Hawley-Crowles chuckled. That was worth developing a little further. "Let us see," she reflected, "Kathleen Ames is coming out this winter, too. Just about Carmen's age. Candidate for her mother's social position, of course. Now the Ames family are all Presbyterians. The Reverend Darius Borwell, D. D., L.L. D., and any other D. that will keep him glued to his ten-thousand-dollar salary, hooked them early in the game. Now suppose—suppose Lafelle should tell the Beaubien that—that there's—no, that won't do! But suppose I tell him that here's a chance for him to back a Catholic against a Protestant for the highest social honors in New York—Carmen versus Kathleen—what would he say? Humph! I'm just as good a Catholic as Protestant. Jim was Irish—clear through. And Catholic, Methodist, or Hard-shell Baptist, as suited his needs. He played 'em all. Suppose I should tip it off to Lafelle that I'm smitten with the pious intention of donating an altar to Holy Saints Cathedral in memory of my late, unlamented consort—what then? It's worth considering, anyway. Yes, it's not a bad idea at all."

And thus it was that a few days later Mrs. Hawley-Crowles timed it so carefully that she chanced to call on the Beaubien with Carmen shortly after Monsignor Lafelle's car had pulled up at the same door. It was the merest accident, too, that Carmen led her puffing guardian directly into the morning room, where sat the Beaubien and Monsignor in earnest conversation. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles would have retired at once, stammering apologies, and reprimanding Carmen for her assumption of liberties in another's house; but the Beaubien was grace and cordiality itself, and she insisted on retaining her three callers and making them mutually acquainted.

With the ice thus broken, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles found it easy to take the contemplated plunge. Therefore she smiled

triumphantly when, a week later, Monsignor Lafelle alighted at her own door, in response to a summons on matters pertaining to the Church.

"But, Madam," replied the holy man, after carefully listening to her announcement, "I can only refer the matter to the Bishop. I am not connected with this diocese. I am traveling almost constantly. But I shall be most pleased to lay it before him, with my endorsement."

"As you say, Monsignor," sweetly responded the gracious Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. "I sought your advice because I had met you through my dear friend, Madam Beaubien."

"It has been a great pleasure to know you and to be of service to you, Madam," said Monsignor, rising to depart. "But," he added with a tender smile, "a pleasure that would be enhanced were you to become one of us."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles knew that at last the time had come. "A moment, please, Monsignor," she said, her heart beating quickly. "There is another matter. Please be seated. It concerns my ward, the young girl whom you met at Madam Beaubien's."

"Ah, indeed!" said the man, resuming his seat. "A beautiful girl."

"Yes!" returned Mrs. Hawley-Crowles enthusiastically. "And just budding into still more beautiful womanhood." She stopped and reflected a moment. Then she threw herself precipitately into her topic, as if she feared further delay would result in the evaporation of her boldness. "Monsignor, it is, as you say, unfortunate that I profess no religious convictions; and yet, as I have told you, I find that as the years pass I lean ever more strongly toward your Church. Now you will pardon me when I say that I am sure it is the avowed intention to make America dominantly Catholic that brings you to this country to work toward that end—is it not so?"

The man's handsome face lighted up pleasantly, but he did not reply. The woman went on without waiting.

"Now, Monsignor, I am going to be terribly frank; and if you disapprove of what I suggest, we will both forget that the matter was ever under discussion. To begin with, I heartily endorse your missionary efforts in this godless country of ours. Nothing but the strong arm of the Catholic Church, it seems to me, can check our headlong plunge into ruin. But, Monsignor, you do not always work where your labors are most needed. You may control political—"

"My dear lady," interrupted the man, holding up a hand and shaking his head in gentle demurral, "the Catholic Church is not in politics."

"But it is in society—or should be!" said the woman earnestly. "And if the Catholic Church is to be supreme in America it must work from the top down, as well as from the lower levels upward. At present our wealthiest, most influential social set is absolutely domineered by a Protestant—and under the influence of a Presbyterian minister at that! Why do you permit it?"

Monsignor Lafelle's eyes twinkled, as he listened politely. But he only stroked the white hair that crowned his shapely head, and waited.

"Monsignor," continued the now thoroughly heated Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, "why do not the women of your Church constitute our society leaders? Why do you not recognize the desirability of forcing your people into every avenue of human activity? And would you resent a suggestion from me as to how in one instance this might be accomplished?"

"Certainly not, Madam," replied Monsignor, with an expression of wonder on his face. "Pray proceed."

"You are laughing at me, I do believe!" she exclaimed, catching the glint in his gray eyes.

"Pardon me, dear lady, I really am deeply interested. Please go on."

"Well, at any rate I have your promise to forget this conversation if you do not approve of it," she said quizzically.

He nodded his head to inspire her confidence; and she continued:

"Very well, now to the point. My ward, the little Inca princess, is coming out shortly. I want her to have the *entrée* into the very best society, into the most fashionable and exclusive set, as befitting her rank." She stopped and awaited the effect of her words.

Monsignor studied her for a moment, and then broke into a genial laugh. "There is nothing reprehensible in your wish, Madam," he said. "Our social system, however imperfect, nevertheless exists, and—dominant Catholic influence might improve it. I am quite sure it would."

"Good!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. "Then will you help me?"

"Why, I really see nothing that I can do," he replied slowly.

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was becoming exasperated with his apparent dullness. "You can do much," she retorted in a tone tinctured with impatience. "Since I have made you my Father Confessor to-day, I am going to tell you that I intend to start a social war that will rip this city wide open. It is going to be war in which Catholic is pitted against Protestant. Now, which side is your Church on?"

For a moment her blunt question startled him, and he stared at her uncomprehendingly; but he quickly recovered his poise and replied calmly, "Neither, Madam; it remains quite neutral."

"What!" she exclaimed. "Aren't you interested?"

"Pardon me if I say it; not at all."

"Oh!" she murmured, her eagerness subsiding. "Then I've made an awful mistake!"

"No," he amended gently, "you have made a good friend. And, as such, I again urge you first to respect the leaning which you mentioned a moment ago and become actively affiliated with our Church here in New York. Both you and the young lady. Will you not consider it?"

"Certainly I will consider it," she responded, brightening with hope. "And I will go so far as to say that I have long had it in mind."

"Then, Madam, when that is accomplished, we may discuss the less important matter of your ward's entrance into society—is it not so?"

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles rose, completely discomfited. "But the girl, Monsignor, is already a Catholic—comes from a Catholic country. It is she whom I am pitting against the Protestant."

"And you will efface yourself?" he queried with a peculiar smile.

"You are cruel," she retorted, affecting an air of injured innocence as she stood before him with downcast eyes. "But—if you—"

"Madam," said Monsignor, "plainly, what is it that you wish me to do?"

The sudden propounding of the question drew an equally sudden but less thoughtful response.

"Tell the Beau—Madam Beaubien that you wish my ward to be received into the best society, and for the reasons I have given you. That's all."

"And is my influence with Madam Beaubien, and hers with the members of fashionable society, sufficient to effect that?" he asked, an odd look coming into his eyes.

"She has but to say the word to J. Wilton Ames, and his wife will receive us both," said the woman, carried away by her eagerness. "And that means strong Catholic influence in New York's most aristocratic set!"

"Ah!"

"Monsignor," continued the woman eagerly, "will your Church receive an altar from me in memory of my late husband?"

He reflected a moment. Then, slowly, and in a low, earnest tone, "It would receive such a gift from one of the faith. When may we expect you to become a communicant?"

The woman paled, and her heart suddenly chilled. She had wondered how far she might go with this clever churchman, and now she knew that she had gone too far. But to retract—to have him relate this conversation and her retraction to the Beaubien—were fatal! She had set her trap—and walked into it. She groped blindly for an answer. Then, raising her eyes and meeting his searching glance, she murmured feebly, "Whenever you say, Monsignor."

When the man had departed, which he did immediately, the plotting woman threw herself upon the davenport and wept with rage. "Belle," she wailed, as her wondering sister entered the room, "I'm going to join the Catholic Church! But I'd go through Sheol to beat that Ames outfit!"

CHAPTER 11

MONSIGNOR LAFELLE made another afternoon call on the Beaubien a few days later. That lady, fresh from her bath, scented, powdered, and charming in a loose, flowing Mandarin robe, received him graciously.

"But I can give you only a moment, Monsignor," she said, waving him to a chair, while she stooped and tenderly took up the two spaniels. "I have a dinner to-night, and so shall not listen unless you have something fresh and really worth while to offer."

"My dear Madam," said he, bowing low before he sank into the great leather armchair, "you are charming, and the Church is justly proud of you."

"Tut, tut, my friend," she returned, knitting her brows. "That may be fresh, I admit, but not worth listening to. And if you persist in that vein I shall be obliged to have William set you into the street."

"I can not apologize for voicing the truth, dear Madam," he replied, as his eyes roved admiringly over her comely figure. "The Church has never ceased to claim you, however far you may have wandered from her. But I will be brief. I am leaving for Canada shortly on a mission of some importance. May I not take with me the consoling assurance that you have at last heard and yielded to the call of the tender Mother, who has never ceased to yearn for her beautiful, wayward daughter?"

The Beaubien smiled indulgently. "There," she said gently, "I thought that was it. No, Monsignor, no," shaking her head. "When only a wild, thoughtless girl I became a Catholic in order that I might marry Gaspard de Beaubien. The priest urged; and I—poof! what cared I? But the past eighteen years have confirmed me in some views; and one is that I shall gain nothing, either here or hereafter, by renewing my allegiance to the Church of Rome."

Monsignor sighed, and stroked his abundant white hair. Yet his sigh bore a hope. "I learned this morning," he said musingly, "that my recent labors with the Dowager Duchess of Altern in England have not been vain. She has become a communicant of Holy Church."

"What!" exclaimed the Beaubien. "The Duchess of Altern —sister of Mrs. J. Wilton Ames? Why, she was a high Anglican—"

"Only a degree below the true Church, Madam. Her action is but anticipatory of a sweeping return of the entire Anglican Church to the true fold. And I learn further," he went on, "that the Duchess will spend the winter in New York with her sister. Which means, of course, an unusually gay season here, does it not?"

The Beaubien quickly recovered from her astonishment. "Well, Monsignor," she laughed, "for once you really are interesting. What else have you to divulge? That Mrs. Ames herself will be the next convert? Or perhaps J. Wilton?"

"No—at least, not yet. But one of your most intimate friends will become a communicant of Holy Saints next Sunday."

"One of my most intimate friends!" The Beaubien set the spaniels down on the floor. "Now, my dear Monsignor, you are positively refreshing. Who is he?"

The man laughed softly. "Am I not right when I insist that you have wandered far, dear Madam? It is not 'he,' but 'she,' your dear friend, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles."

The Beaubien's mouth opened wide and she sat suddenly upright and gazed blankly at her raconteur. The man went on, apparently oblivious of the effect his information had produced. "Her beautiful ward, who is to make her bow to society this winter, is one of us by birth."

"Then you have been at work on Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her ward, have you?" said the Beaubien severely, and there was a threatening note in her voice.

"Why," returned Monsignor easily, "the lady sent for me to express her desire to become affiliated with the Church. We do not seek her. And I have had no conversation with the girl, I assure you."

The Beaubien reflected. Then:

"Will you tell me why, Monsignor, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles takes this unusual step?"

"Unusual! Is it unusual, Madam, for a woman who has seen much of the world to turn from it to the solace and promise of the Church?"

The Beaubien laughed sharply. "For women like Mrs. Hawley-Crowles it is, decidedly. What was her price, Monsignor?"

"Madam! You astonish me!"

"Monsignor, I do not. I know Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. And by this time you do, too. She is the last woman in the world to turn from it."

"But the question you have just propounded reflects seriously upon both the Church and me—"

"Bah!" interjected the Beaubien, her eyes flashing. "Wait," she commanded imperiously, as he rose. "I have a few things to say to you, since this is to be your last call."

"Madam, not the last, I hope. For I shall not cease to plead the cause of the Church to you—"

"Surely, Monsignor, that is your business. You are welcome in my house at any time, and particularly when you have such delightful scraps of gossip as these which you have brought to-day. But, a word before you go, lest you become indiscreet on your return. Play Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to any extent you wish, but let her ward alone—*absolutely!* She is not for you."

The cold, even tone in which the woman said this left no doubt in the man's mind of her meaning. She was not trifling with him now, he knew. In her low-voiced words he found no trace of banter, of sophistry, nor of aught that he might in any wise misinterpret.

"Now, Monsignor, I have some influence in New York, as you may possibly know. Will you admit that I can do much for or against you? Drop your mask, therefore, and tell me frankly just what has induced Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to unite with your Church."

The man knew he was pitting his own against a master mind. He hesitated and weighed well his words before replying. "Madam," said he at length, with a note of reproach, "you misjudge the lady, the Church, and me, its humble servant. The latter require no defense. As for Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, I speak truly when I say that doubtless she has been greatly influenced by love for her late husband."

"What!" The Beaubien half rose from her chair. "Jim Crowles—that raw, Irish boob, who was holding down a job on the police force until Ames found he could make a convenient

tool of him! The man who was Gannette's cat's-paw in the Fall River franchise steal! Now, Monsignor, would you have me believe you devoid of all sense?"

"But," ejaculated the man, now becoming exasperated, and for the moment so losing his self-control as to make wretched use of his facts, "she is erecting an altar in Holy Saints as a memorial to him!"

"Heavens above!" The Beaubien sank back limp.

Monsignor Lafelle again made as if to rise. He felt that he was guilty of a miserable *faux pas*. "Madam, I regret that I must be leaving. But the hour—"

"Stay, Monsignor!" The Beaubien roused up and laid a detaining hand upon his arm. "Our versatile friend, what other projects has she in hand? What is she planning for her young ward?"

"Why, really, I can not say—beyond the fact that the girl is to be introduced to society this winter."

"Humph! Going to make a try for the Ames set?"

"That, I believe, Madam, would be useless without your aid."

"Did Mrs. Hawley-Crowles say so, Monsignor?" demanded the woman, leaning forward eagerly.

"Why, I believe I am not abusing her confidence when I say that she intimated as much," he said, watching her closely and sparring now with better judgment. "She mentioned Mrs. Ames as New York's fashionable society leader—"

"There is no such position as leader in New York society, Monsignor," interrupted the Beaubien coldly. "There are sets and cliques, and Mrs. Ames happens to be prominent in the one which at present foolishly imagines it constitutes the upper stratum. Rot! And Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, with nothing but a tarnished name and a large bank account to recommend her, now wishes to break into that clique and attain social leadership, does she? How decidedly interesting!"

Then the woman's eyes narrowed and grew hard. Leaning closer to the churchman, she rested the tip of her finger on his knee. "So, Monsignor," she said, with cold precision, "this is Mrs. Hawley-Crowles's method of renouncing the world, is it? Sublime! And she would use both you and me, eh? And you are her ambassador at the court of the Beaubien? Very well, then, she shall use us. But you and I will first make this compact, my dear Monsignor: Mrs. Hawley-Crowles shall be taken into the so-called 'Ames set,' and you shall cease importuning me to return to your Church, and what is more, shall promise to have no conversation on church matters with her ward, the young girl. If you do not agree to this, Monsignor, I shall set in motion forces that will make your return to New York quite

undesirable." When she concluded, she looked long and steadily into his eyes.

Monsignor got slowly to his feet. "Madam!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, "my astonishment—"

"There," she said calmly, as she rose and took his hand, "please omit the dramatics, Monsignor. And now you must go, for to-night I entertain, and I have already given you more time than I intended. But, Monsignor, do you in future work with or against me? Are we to be friends or enemies?"

"Why, Madam," he replied quickly, "we could never be the latter!"

"And you always respect the wishes of a friend, especially if she is a lady, do you not?"

"Always, Madam," he returned after a moment's hesitation, as he bowed low over her hand.

"Then, good-bye. And, Monsignor," she added, when he reached the door, "I shall be pleased to attend the dedication of the Hawley-Crowles altar."

When Monsignor's car glided away from her door the Beaubien's face grew dark, and her eyes drew to narrow slits. "So," she reflected, as she entered the elevator to mount to her dressing room, "that is her game, is it? The poor, fat simpleton has no interest in either the girl or myself, other than to use us as stepping-stones. She forgets that a stone sometimes turns under the foot. Fool!"

She entered her room and rang for her maid. Turning to the pier glass, she threw on the electric light and scrutinized her features narrowly. "It's going," she murmured, "fast! God, how I hate those gray hairs! Oh, what a farce life is—what a howling, mocking farce! I hate it! I hate everything—everybody! No—that little girl—if it is possible for me to love, I love her."

She sank into an easy chair. "I wonder what it is she does to me. I'm hypnotized, I guess. Anyhow, I'm different when I'm with her. And to think that Hawley-Crowles would sacrifice the child—humph! But, if the girl is made of the right stuff—and I know she is—she will stand up under it and be stronger for the experience. She has got something that will *make* her stand! I once asked her what she had that I didn't, and now I know—it is her religion, the religion that Borwell and Lafelle and the whole kit of preachers and priests would corrupt if they had half a chance! Very well, we'll see what it does under the test. If it saves her, then I want it myself. But, as for that little pin-headed Hawley-Crowles, she's already signed her own death-warrant. She shall get into the Ames set, yes. And I will use her, oh, beautifully! to pay off certain

old scores against Madam Ames—and then I'll crush her like a dried leaf, the fat fool!"

The Beaubien's position was, to say the least, peculiar, and one which required infinite tact on her part to protect. It was for that reason that the decorum which prevailed at her dinners was so rigidly observed, and that, whatever the moral status of the man who sat at her board, his conduct was required to be above reproach, on penalty of immediate ejection from the circle of financial pirates, captains of commercial jugglery, and political intriguers who made these feasts opportunities for outlining their predatory campaigns against that most anomalous of creatures, the common citizen.

It was about this table, at whose head always sat the richly gowned Beaubien, that the inner circle of financial kings had gathered almost nightly for years to rig the market, determine the price of wheat or cotton, and develop mendacious schemes of stock-jobbery whose golden harvests they could calculate almost to a dollar before launching. As the wealth of this clique of financial manipulators swelled beyond all bounds, so increased their power, until at last it could be justly said that, when Ames began to dominate the Stock Exchange, the Beaubien practically controlled Wall Street—and, therefore, in a sense, Washington itself. But always with a tenure of control dubiously dependent upon the caprices of the men who continued to pay homage to her personal charm and keen, powerful intellect.

At the time of which we speak her power was at its zenith, and she could with equal impunity decapitate the wealthiest, most aristocratic society dame, or force the door of the most exclusive set for any protégée who might have been kept long years knocking in vain, or whose family name, perchance, headed a list of indictments for gross peculations. At these unicameral meetings, held in the great, dark, mahogany-wainscoted dining room of the Beaubien mansion, where a single lamp of priceless workmanship threw a flood of light upon the sumptuous table beneath and left the rest of the closely guarded room shrouded in Stygian darkness, plans were laid and decrees adopted which seated judges, silenced clergymen, elected senators, and influenced presidents. There a muck-raking, hostile press was muffled. There business opposition was crushed and competition throttled. There tax rates were determined and tariff schedules formulated. There public opinion was disrupted, character assassinated, and the death-warrant of every threatening reformer drawn and signed. In a word, there Mammon, in the *rôle* of business, organized and unorganized, legitimate and piratical, sat enthroned, with wires

leading into every mart of the world, and into every avenue of human endeavor, be it social, political, commercial, or religious. These wires were gathered together into the hands of one man, the directing genius of the group, J. Wilton Ames. Over him lay the shadow of the Beaubien.

An hour after the departure of Monsignor Lafelle the Beaubien, like a radiant sun, descended to the library to greet her assembled guests. Some moments later the heavy doors of the great dining room swung noiselessly open, and the lady proceeded unescorted to her position at the head of the table. At her signal the half dozen men sat down, and the butler immediately entered, followed by two serving men with the cocktails and the first course. The chair at the far end of the table, opposite the Beaubien, remained unoccupied.

"Ames is late to-night," observed the girthy Gannette, glancing toward the vacant seat, and clumsily attempting to tuck his napkin into his collar.

The Beaubien looked sharply at him. "Were you at the club this afternoon, Mr. Gannette?" she inquired coldly.

Gannette straightened up and became rigid. Pulling the napkin down hastily, he replied in a thick voice, "Just a little game of bridge—some old friends—back from Europe—"

The Beaubien turned to the butler. "William, Mr. Gannette is not drinking wine this evening." The butler bowed and removed the glasses from that gentleman's place.

Gannette turned to expostulate. "Now, Lucile—" he began peevishly. The Beaubien held up a hand. Gannette glowered and sank down in his chair like a swollen toad.

"May be Ames is trying to break into the C. and R. directors' meeting," suggested Weston, himself a director in a dozen companies, and a bank president besides. A general laugh followed the remark.

"They tell me," said Fitch, "that for once Ames has been outwitted, and that by a little bucket-shop broker named Ketchim."

"How's that?" queried Kane, Board of Trade plunger, and the most mettlesome speculator of the group.

"Why," explained Weston, "some months ago Ames tried to reach Ed. Stolz through Ketchim, the old man's nephew, and get control of C. and R. But friend nephew dropped the portcullis just as Ames was dashing across the drawbridge, and J. Wilton found himself outside, looking through the bars. First time I've ever known that to happen. Now the boys have got hold of it on 'Change, and Ames has been getting it from every quarter."

"Long time leaking out, seems to me," remarked Kane. "But what's Ames going to do about it?"

"Nothing, I guess," returned Weston. "He seems to have dropped the matter."

"I think you will find yourself mistaken," put in the Beaubien evenly.

"Why?" queried Fitch, as all eyes turned upon the woman. "Have you inside information?"

"None whatever," she replied. "But Mr. Ames always gets what he goes after, and he will secure control of C. and R. eventually."

"I don't believe it!" vigorously asserted Murdock, who had been an interested listener. "He will never oust Stolz."

"I have one thousand dollars that says he will," said the Beaubien, calmly regarding the speaker. "William, my checkbook, please."

Murdock seemed taken back for the moment; but lost no time recovering his poise. Drawing out his own book he wrote a check in the Beaubien's name for the amount and sent it down the table to her.

"Mr. Fitch will hold the stakes," said the woman, handing him the two slips of paper. "And we will set a time limit of eighteen months."

"By the way," remarked Peele, the only one of the group who had taken no part in the preceding conversation, "I see by the evening paper that there's been another accident in the Avon mills. Fellow named Marcus caught in a machine and crushed all out of shape. That's the third one down there this month. They'll force Ames to equip his mills with safety devices if this keeps up."

"Not while the yellow metal has any influence upon the Legislature," returned the Beaubien with a knowing smile. "But," she added more seriously, "that is not where the danger lies. The real source of apprehension is in the possibility of a strike. And if war breaks out among those Hungarians down there it will cost him more than to equip all his mills now with safety devices."

Gannette, who had been sulking in his chair, roused up. "Speaking of war," he growled, "has Ames, or any of you fellows, got a finger in the muddle in South America? I've got interests down there—concessions and the like—and by—!" He wandered off into incoherent mutterings.

The Beaubien gave a sharp command to the butler. "William, Mr. Gannette is leaving now. You will escort him to the door."

"Now look here, Lucile!" cried Gannette, his apoplectic face becoming more deeply purple, and his blear eyes leering angrily upon the calm woman. "I ain't a-goin' to stand this!

What have I done? I'm as sober as any one here, an'—" William took the heavy man gently by the arm and persuaded him to his feet. The other guests suppressed their smiles and remained discreetly quiet.

"But—my car—!" sputtered Gannette.

"Have Henri take him to his club, William," said the Beaubien, rising. "Good night, Mr. Gannette. We will expect you Wednesday evening, and we trust that we will not have to accept your excuses again."

Gannette was led soddenly out. The Beaubien quietly resumed her seat. It was the second time the man had been dismissed from her table, and the guests marveled that it did not mean the final loss of her favor. But she remained inscrutable; and the conversation quickly drifted into new channels. A few moments later William returned and made a quiet announcement:

"Mr. Ames."

A huge presence emerged from the darkness into the light. The Beaubien immediately rose and advanced to greet the newcomer. "What is it?" she whispered, taking his hand.

The man smiled down into her upturned, anxious face. His only reply was a reassuring pressure of her hand. But she comprehended, and her face brightened.

"Gentlemen," remarked Ames, taking the vacant chair, "the President's message is out. I have been going over it with Hood—which accounts for my tardiness," he added, nodding pleasantly to the Beaubien. "Quoting from our chief executive's long list of innocent platitudes, I may say that 'private monopoly is criminally unjust, wholly indefensible, and not to be tolerated in a Republic founded upon the premise of equal rights to all mankind.' "

"Certainly not!" concurred Weston, holding up his glass and gazing admiringly at the rich color of the wine.

The others laughed. "Quite my sentiments, too," murmured Fitch, rolling his eyes upward and attempting with poor success to assume a beatific expression.

"Furthermore," continued Ames, with mock gravity, "the interlocking of corporation directorates must be prohibited by law; power must be conferred upon the Interstate Commerce Commission to superintend the financial management of railroads; holding-companies must cease to exist; and corrective policies must be shaped, whereby so-called 'trusts' will be regulated and rendered innocuous. Are we agreed?"

"We are," said they all, in one voice.

"Carried," concluded Ames in a solemn tone. Then a burst of laughter rose from the table; and even the inscrutable William smiled behind his hand.

"But, seriously," said Weston, when the laughter had ceased, "I believe we've got a President now who's going to do something, don't you?"

"I do not," replied Ames emphatically. "As long as the human mind remains as it is there is nothing to fear, though Congress legislate itself blue in the face. Reform is not to be made like a garment and forced upon the people from the outside. It is a growth from within. Restrictive measures have not as yet, in all the history of civilization, reformed a single criminal."

"What does Hood say?" asked Murdock.

"That we are puncture-proof," replied Ames with a light laugh.

"But what about your indictment in that cotton deal? Is Hood going to find you law-proof there?"

"The case is settled," said Ames easily. "I went into court this morning and plead guilty to the indictment for conspiring to corner the cotton market two years ago. I admitted that I violated the Sherman law. The judge promptly fined me three thousand dollars, for which I immediately wrote a check, leaving me still the winner by some two million seven hundred thousand dollars on the deal, to say nothing of compound interest on the three thousand for the past two years. You see the beneficent effect of legislation, do you not?"

"By George, Ames, you certainly were stingy not to let us in on that!" exclaimed Kane.

"Cotton belongs to me, gentlemen," replied Ames simply. "You will have to keep out."

"Well," remarked Fitch, glancing about the table, "suppose we get down to the business of the evening—if agreeable to our hostess," bowing in the direction of the Beaubien.

The latter nodded her approval of the suggestion. "Has any one anything new to offer?" she said.

Some moments of silence followed. Then Ames spoke. "There is a little matter," he began, "that I have been revolving for some days. Perhaps it may interest you. It concerns the Albany post road. It occurred to me some time ago that a franchise for a trolley line on that road could be secured and ultimately sold for a round figure to the wealthy residents whose estates lie along it, and who would give a million dollars rather than have a line built there. After some preliminary examination I got Hood to draft a bill providing for the building of the road, and submitted it to Jacobson, Commissioner of Highways. He reported that it would be the means of destroying the post road. I convinced him, on the other hand, that it would be the means of lining his purse with fifty thou-

sand dollars. So he very naturally gave it his endorsement. I then got in consultation with Senator Gossitch, and had him arrange a meeting with the Governor, in Albany. I think," he concluded, "that about five hundred thousand dollars will grease the wheels all 'round. I've got the Governor on the hip in that Southern Mexican deal, and he is at present eating out of my hand. I'll lay this project on the table now, and you can take it up if you so desire."

"The scheme seems all right," commented Weston, after a short meditation. "But the profits are not especially large. What else have you?"

"Well, a net profit of half a million to split up among us would at least provide for a yachting party next summer," remarked Ames sententiously. "And no work connected with it—in fact, the work has been done. I shall want an additional five per cent for handling it."

An animated discussion followed; and then Fitch offered a motion that the group definitely take up the project. The Beaubien put the vote, and it was carried without dissent.

"What about that potato scheme you were figuring on, Ames?" asked Fitch at this juncture. "Anything ever come of it?"

Ames's eyes twinkled. "I didn't get much encouragement from my friends," he replied. "A perfectly feasible scheme, too."

"I don't believe it," put in Weston emphatically. "It never could be put through."

"I have one million dollars that says it could," returned Ames calmly. "Will you cover it?"

Weston threw up his hands in token of surrender. "Not I!" he exclaimed, scurrying for cover.

Ames laughed. "Well," he said, "suppose we look into the scheme and see if we don't want to handle it. It simply calls for a little thought and work. The profits would be tremendous. Shall I explain?" He stopped and glanced at the Beaubien for approval. She nodded, and he went on:

"I have lately been investigating the subject of various food supplies other than wheat and corn as possible bases for speculation, and my attention has been drawn strongly to a very humble one, potatoes."

A general laugh followed this announcement. But Ames continued unperturbed:

"I find that in some sections of the West potatoes are so plentiful at times that they bring but twenty cents a bushel. My investigations have covered a period of several months, and now I have in my possession a large map of the United States

with the potato sections, prices, freight rates and all other necessary data indicated. The results are interesting. My idea is to send agents into all these sections next summer before the potatoes are turned up, and contract for the entire crop at twenty-five cents a bushel. The agents will pay the farmers cash, and agree to assume all expenses of digging, packing, shipping, and so forth, allowing the farmer to take what he needs for his own consumption. Needless to say, the potatoes will not be removed from the fields, but will be allowed to rot in the ground. Those that do reach the market will sell for a dollar and a half in New York and Chicago."

"In other words," added Fitch, "you are simply figuring to corner the market for the humble tuber, eh?"

"Precisely," said Ames.

"But—you say you have all the necessary data now?"

"All, even to the selection of a few of my agents. I can control freight rates for what we may wish to ship. The rest of the crop will be left to rot. The farmers will jump at such a bargain. And the consumers will pay our price for what they must have."

"Very pretty," mused Murdock. "And how much do you figure we shall need to round the corner?"

"A million, cash in hand," replied Ames.

"Is this anything that the women can mix into?" asked Fitch suddenly. "You know they forced us to dump tons of our cold-storage stuff onto the market two years ago."

"That was when I controlled wheat," said Ames, "and was all tied up. But this is a wholly different proposition. It will be done so quietly and thoroughly that it will all be over and the profits pocketed before the women wake up to what we're doing. In this case there will be nothing to store. And potatoes exposed in the field rot quickly, you know."

The rest of the group seemed to study the idea for some moments. Then the practical Murdock inquired of Ames if he would agree to handle the project, provided they took it up.

"Yes," assented Ames, "on a five per cent basis. And I am ready to put agents in the field to-morrow."

"Then, Madam Beaubien," said Fitch, "I move that we adopt the plan as set forth by Mr. Ames, and commission him to handle it, calling upon us equally for whatever funds he may need."

A further brief discussion ensued; and then the resolution was unanimously adopted.

"Say, Ames," queried Weston, with a glint of mischief in his eyes, "will any of these potatoes be shipped over the C. and R.?"

A laugh went up around the table, in which Ames himself joined. "Yes," he said, "potatoes and cotton will both go over that road next summer, and I shall fix the rebates."

"How about your friend Ketchim?" suggested Fitch, with a wink at Murdock.

Ames's mouth set grimly, and the smile left his face. "Ketchim is going to Sing Sing for that little deal," he returned in a low, cold tone, so cold that even the Beaubien could not repress a little shudder. "I had him on Molino, but he trumped up a new company which absorbed Molino and satisfied everybody, so I am blocked for the present. But, mark me, I shall strip him of every dollar, and then put him behind the bars before I've finished!"

And no one sought to refute the man, for they knew he spoke truth.

At midnight, while the cathedral chimes in the great hall clock were sending their trembling message through the dark house, the Beaubien rose, and the dinner was concluded. A few moments later the guests were spinning in their cars to their various homes or clubs—all but Ames. As he was preparing to leave, the Beaubien laid a hand on his arm. "Wait a moment, Wilton," she said. "I have something important to discuss with you." She led him into the morning room, where a fire was blazing cheerily in the grate, and drew up a chair before it for him, then nestled on the floor at his feet.

"I sent Gannette home this evening," she began, by way of introduction. "He was drunk. I would drop him entirely, only you said—"

"We need him," interrupted Ames. "Hold him a while longer."

"I'll soil my hands by doing it; but it is for you. Now tell me," she went on eagerly, "what about Colombia? Have you any further news from Wenceslas?"

"A cable to-day. Everything's all right. Don't worry. The Church is with the Government, and they will win—although your money may be tied up for a few years. Still, you can't lose in the end."

The woman sat for some moments gazing into the fire. Then:

"Lafelle was here again to-day."

"Hold him, too," said Ames quickly. "Looks as if I had made you a sort of holding company, doesn't it?" he added, with a chuckle. "But we shall have good use for these fellows."

"He gave me some very interesting news," she said; and then went on to relate the conversation in detail. Ames laughed loudly as he listened.

"And now, Wilton," said the Beaubien, a determined look coming into her face, "you have always said that you never forgave me for making you let Jim Crowles off, when you had him by the throat. Well, I'm going to give you a chance to get more than even. Jim's fat widow is after your wife's scalp. I intend that she shall lose her own in the chase. I've got my plans all laid, and I want your wife to meet the lovely Mrs. Hawley-Crowles at the Fitch's next Thursday afternoon. It will be just a formal call—mutual introductions—and, later, an invitation from Mrs. Ames to Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. Meantime, I want you to get Mrs. Hawley-Crowles involved in a financial way, and shear her of every penny! Do you understand?"

Ames looked at her quizzically. Then he broke into another sharp laugh. "My dear," said he, taking her hand, "you are charming this evening. Added years only make you more beautiful."

"Nonsense, Will!" she deprecated, although the smile she gave him attested her pleasure in the compliment. "Well," she continued briskly, "if I'm so beautiful, you can't help loving me; and if you love me, you will do what I ask."

He playfully pinched her cheek. "Why, poor old Jim Crowles! Really, I've long since forgotten him. Do you realize that that was more than ten years ago?"

"Please don't mention years, dear," she murmured, shuddering a little. "Tell me, what can we do to teach this fat hussy a lesson?"

"Well," he suggested, laughing, "we might get Ketchim after her, to sell her a wad of his worthless stocks; then when he goes down, as he is going one of these days, we will hope that it will leave her on the rocks of financial ruin, eh?"

"What's Ketchim promoting?" she asked. "I know nothing about him."

"Why, among other innocent novelties, a scheme bearing the sonorous title of Simití Development Company, I am told by my brokers."

"Simití! Why—I've heard Carmen mention that name. I wonder—"

"Well, and who is Carmen?" he asked with a show of real interest.

"My little friend—the one and only honest person I've ever dealt with, excepting, of course, present company."

"The amendment is accepted. And now where does this Carmen enter the game?"

"Why, she's—surely you know about her!"

"If I did I should not ask."

"Well, she is a little Colombian—"

"Colombian!"

"Yes. They say she's an Inca princess. Came up with the engineers who went down there for Ketchim to examine the Molino properties. She lived all her life in a town called Simiti until she came up here."

Ames leaned over and looked steadily into the fire. "Never heard of the place," he murmured dreamily.

"Well," said the Beaubien eagerly, "she's a—a wonderful child! I'm different when I'm with her."

He roused from his meditations and smiled down at the woman. "Then I'd advise you not to be with her much, for I prefer you as you are."

They sat some minutes in silence. Then the woman looked up at her companion. "What are you thinking about so seriously?" she asked.

The man started; then drew himself up and gave a little nervous laugh. "Of you," he replied evasively, "always."

She reached up and slapped his cheek tenderly. "You were dreaming of your awful business deals," she said. "What have you in hand now?—besides the revolution in Colombia, your mines, your mills, your banks, your railroads and trolley lines, your wheat and potato corners, your land concessions and cattle schemes, and—well, that's a start, at least," she finished, pausing for breath.

"Another big deal," he said abruptly.

"Wheat, again?"

"No, cotton. I'm buying every bale I can find, in Europe, Asia, and the States."

"But, Will, you've been caught in cotton before, you know. And I don't believe you can get away with it again. Unless—"

"That's it—unless," he interrupted. "And that's just the part I have taken care of. It's a matter of tariff. The cotton schedule will go through as I have it outlined. I practically own the Commission. They don't dare refuse to pass the measure. Cotton is low now. In a few months the tariff on cotton products will be up. The new tariff-wall sends the price of raw stuff soaring. I profit, coming and going. I was beaten on the last deal simply because of faulty weather prognostications. I made a bad guess. This time the weather doesn't figure. I'll let you in, if you wish. But these other fellows have got to stay out."

"I haven't a penny to invest, Will," she replied mournfully. "You got me so terribly involved in this Colombian revolution."

"Oh, well," he returned easily, "I'll lend you what you need, any amount. And you can give me your advice and suggestions

from time to time. As for your Colombian investments, haven't I guaranteed them, practically?"

"Not in writing," she said, looking up at him with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Bah! Well, do you want that?"

"No, certainly not," she returned, giving him a glance of admiration. "But, to return, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles is going to be received into your wife's set, and you are going to give her a good financial whipping?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. I'm yours to command. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles shall go to the poor-house, if you say the word. But now, my dear, have William order my car. And, let me see, Mrs. Ames is to meet Mrs. Hawley-Crowles at Fitch's? Just a chance call, I take it."

"Yes, dear," murmured the Beaubien, reaching up and kissing him; "next Thursday at three. Good night. Call me on the 'phone to-morrow."

CHAPTER 12

THE Ames building, a block from the Stock Exchange, was originally only five stories in height. But as the Ames interests grew, floor after floor was added, until, on the day that Mrs. Hawley-Crowles pointed it out to Carmen from the window of her limousine, it had reached, tower and all, a height of twenty-five stories, and was increasing at an average rate of two additional a year. It was not its size that aroused interest, overtopped as it was by many others, but its uniqueness; for, though a hive of humming industry, it did not house a single business that was not either owned outright or controlled by J. Wilton Ames, from the lowly cigar stands in the marble corridors to the great banking house of Ames and Company on the second floor. The haberdashers, the shoe-shining booths, the soda fountains, and the great commercial enterprises that dwelt about them, each and all acknowledged fealty and paid homage to the man who brooded over them in his magnificent offices on the twenty-fifth floor in the tower above.

It was not by any consensus of opinion among the financiers of New York that Ames had assumed leadership, but by sheer force of what was doubtless the most dominant character developed in recent years by those peculiar forces which have produced the American multimillionaire. "Mental dynamite!" was Weston's characterization of the man. "And," he once

added, when, despite his anger, he could not but admire Ames's tactical blocking of his piratical move, which the former's keen foresight had perceived threatened danger at Washington, "it is not by any tacit agreement that we accept him, but because he knows ten tricks to our one, that's all."

To look at the man, now in his forty-fifth year, meant, generally, an expression of admiration for his unusual physique, and a wholly erroneous appraisal of his character. His build was that of a gladiator. He stood six-feet-four in height, with Herculean shoulders and arms, and a pair of legs that suggested nothing so much as the great pillars which supported the facade of the Ames building. Those arms and legs, and those great back-muscles, had sent his college shell to victory every year that he had sat in the boat. They had won every game on the gridiron in which he had participated as the greatest "center" the college ever developed. For baseball he was a bit too massive, much to his own disappointment, but the honors he failed to secure there he won in the field events, and in the surreptitiously staged boxing and wrestling bouts when, hidden away in the cellar of some secret society hall, he would crush his opponents with an ease and a peculiar glint of satisfaction in his gray eyes that was grimly prophetic of days to come. His mental attitude toward contests for superiority of whatever nature did not differ essentially from that of the Roman gladiators: he entered them to win. If he fell, well and good; he expected "thumbs down." If he won, his opponent need look for no exhibition of generosity on his part. When his man lay prone before him, he stooped and cut his throat. And he would have loathed the one who forbore to do likewise with himself.

In scholarship he might have won a place, had not the physical side of his nature been so predominant, and his remarkable muscular strength so great a prize to the various athletic coaches and directors. Ames was first an animal; there was no stimulus as yet sufficiently strong to arouse his latent spirituality. And yet his intellect was keen; and to those studies to which he was by nature or inheritance especially attracted, economics, banking, and all branches of finance, he brought a power of concentration that was as stupendous as his physical strength. His mental make-up was peculiar, in that it was the epitome of energy—manifested at first only in brute force—and in that it was wholly deficient in the sense of fear. Because of this his daring was phenomenal.

Immediately upon leaving college Ames became associated with his father in the already great banking house of Ames and Company. But the animality of his nature soon found the

confinement irksome; his father's greater conservatism hampered his now rapidly expanding spirit of commercialism; and after a few years in the banking house he withdrew and set up for himself. The father, while lacking the boy's fearlessness, had long since recognized dominant qualities in him which he himself did not possess, and he therefore confidently acquiesced in his son's desire, and, in addition, gave him *carte blanche* in the matter of funds for his speculative enterprises.

Four years later J. Wilton Ames, rich in his own name, already becoming recognized as a power in the world of finance, with diversified enterprises which reached into almost every country of the globe, hastened home from a foreign land in response to a message announcing the sudden death of his father. The devolving of his parent's vast fortune upon himself—he was the sole heir—then necessitated his permanent location in New York. And so, reluctantly giving up his travels, he gathered his agents and lieutenants about him, concentrating his interests as much as possible in the Ames building, and settled down to the enjoyment of expanding his huge fortune. A few months later he married, and the union amalgamated the proud old Essex stock of Ames, whose forbears fought under the Conqueror and were written in the Doomsday Book, to the wealthy and aristocratic Van Heyse branch of old Amsterdam. To this union were born a son and a daughter, twins.

The interval between his graduation from college and the death of his father was all but unknown to the cronies of his subsequent years in New York. Though he had spent much of it in the metropolis, he had been self-centered and absorbed, even lonely, while laying his plans and developing the schemes which resulted in financial preëminence. With unlimited money at his disposal, he was unhampered in the choice of his business clientele, and he formed it from every quarter of the globe. Much of his time had been spent abroad, and he had become as well known on the Paris bourse and the exchanges of Europe as in his native land. Confident and successful from the outset; without any trace of pride or touch of hauteur in his nature; as wholly lacking in ethical development and in generosity as he was in fear; gradually becoming more sociable and companionable, although still reticent of certain periods of his past; his cunning and brutality increasing with years; and his business sagacity and keen strategy becoming the talk of the Street; with no need to raise his eyes beyond the low plane of his material endeavors; he pursued his business partly for the pleasure the game afforded him, partly for the power which his accumulations bestowed upon him, and mostly be-

cause it served as an adequate outlet for his tremendous, almost superhuman, driving energy. If he betrayed and debauched ideals, it was because he was utterly incapable of rising to them, nor felt the stimulus to make the attempt. If he achieved no noble purpose, it was because when he glanced at the mass of humanity about him he looked through the lenses of self. His glance fell always first upon J. Wilton Ames—and he never looked beyond. The world had been created for him; the cosmos but expressed his Ego.

On the morning after his conversation with the Beaubien regarding the social aspirations of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, the financier sat at his rich mahogany desk on the top floor of the Ames building in earnest discussion with his lawyer, Alonzo Hood. The top floor of the tower was divided into eight rooms. Two of these constituted Ames's inner *sanctum;* one was Hood's private office; and the rest were devoted to clerks and stenographers. A telegrapher occupied an alcove adjoining Hood's room, and handled confidential messages over private wires to the principal cities in the country. A private telephone connected Ames's desk with the Beaubien mansion. Private lines ran to the Stock Exchange and to various other points throughout the city. The telegraph and telephone companies gave his messages preference over all others. At a word he would be placed in almost instant communication with New Orleans, San Francisco, London, Berlin, or Cairo. Private lines and speaking tubes ran to every room or floor of the building where a company, firm, or individual was doing business. At the office of the Telegraph Service up-town he maintained messengers who carried none but his own despatches. In the railroad yards his private car stood always in readiness; and in the harbor his yacht was kept constantly under steam. A motor car stood ever in waiting in the street below, close to the shaft of a private automatic elevator, which ran through the building for his use alone. This elevator also penetrated the restaurant in the basement of the building, where a private room and a special waiter were always at the man's disposal. A private room and special attendant were maintained in the Turkish baths adjoining, and he had his own personal suite and valet at his favorite club up-town.

This morning he was at his desk, as usual, at eight o'clock. Before him lay the various daily reports from his mines, his mills, his railroads, and his bank. These disposed of, there followed a quick survey of the day's appointments, arranged for him by his chief secretary. Then he summoned Hood. As the latter entered, Ames was absorbed in the legend of the stock ticker.

"C. and R. closed yesterday at twenty-six," he commented. Then, swinging back in his chair, "What's Stolz doing?"

"For one thing, he has made Miss Fagin his private stenographer," replied Hood.

Ames chuckled. "Now we will begin to get *real* information," he remarked. "Tell Miss Fagin you will give her fifty dollars a week from now on; but she is to deliver to you a carbon copy of every letter she writes for Stolz. And I want those copies on my desk every morning when I come down. Hood," he continued, abruptly turning the conversation, "what have you dug up about Ketchim's new company?"

"Very little, sir," replied Hood with a trace of embarrassment. "His lawyer is a fledgeling named Cass, young, but wise enough not to talk. I called on him yesterday afternoon to have a little chat about the old Molino company, representing that I was speaking for certain stockholders. But he told me to bring the stockholders in and he would talk with them personally."

Ames laughed, while the lawyer grinned sheepishly. "Is that the sort of service you are rendering for a hundred-thousand-dollar salary?" he bantered. "Hood, I'm ashamed of you!"

"I can't blame you; I am ashamed of myself," replied the lawyer.

"Well," continued Ames good-naturedly, "leave Ketchim to me. I've got three men now buying small amounts of stock in his various companies. I'll call for receiverships pretty soon, and we will see this time that he doesn't refund the money. Now about other matters: the Albany post trolley deal is to go through. Also the potato scheme. Work up the details and let me have them at once. Have you got the senate bill drawn for Gossitch?"

"It will be ready this afternoon. As it stands now, the repealing section gives any city the right to grant saloon licenses of indefinite length, instead of for one year."

"That's the idea. We want the bill so drawn that it will become practically impossible to revoke a license."

"As it now reads," said Hood, "it makes a saloon license assignable. That creates a property right that can hardly be revoked."

"Just so," returned Ames. "As I figure, it will create a value of some twenty millions for those who own saloons in New York. A tidy sum!"

"That means for the brewers."

"And distillers, yes. And if the United States ever reaches the point where it will have to buy the saloons in order to wipe them out, it will face a very handsome little expenditure."

"But, Mr. Ames, a very large part of the stock of American brewing companies is owned in Europe. How are you—"

"Nominally, it is. But for two years, and more, I have been quietly gathering in brewing stock from abroad, and to-day I have some ten millions in my own control, from actual purchases, options, and so forth. I'm going to organize a holding company, when the time arrives, and I figure that within the next year or so we will practically control the production of beer and spirituous liquors in the United States and Europe. The formation of that company will be a task worthy of your genius, Hood."

"It will be a pleasure to undertake it," replied Hood with animation. "By the way, Mr. Ames, I got in touch with Senator Mall last evening at the club, and he assures me that the senate committee have so changed the phraseology of the tariff bill on cotton products that the clause you wish retained will be continued with its meaning unaltered. In fact, the discrimination which the hosiery interests desire will be fully observed. Your suggestion as to an ad valorem duty of fifty per cent on hose valued at less than sixty-five cents a dozen pairs is exceptionally clever, in view of the fact that there are none of less than that value."

Ames laughed again. "Triumphant Republicanism," he commented. "And right in the face of the President's message. Wire Mall that I will be in Washington Thursday evening to advise with him further about it. And you will go with me. Hood, we've got a fight on in regard to the President's idea of granting permission in private suits to use judgments and facts brought out and entered in government suits against combinations. That idea has got to be killed! And the regulation of security issues of railroads—preposterous! Why, the President's crazy! If Mall and Gossitch and Wells don't oppose that in the Senate, I'll see that they are up before the lunacy commission—and I have some influence with that body!"

"There is nothing to fear, I think," replied Hood reassuringly. "An important piece of business legislation like that will hardly go through this session. And then we will have time to prepare to frustrate it. The suggestion to place the New York Stock Exchange under government supervision is a much more serious matter, I think."

"See here, Hood," said Ames, leaning forward and laying a hand upon that gentleman's knee, "when that happens, we'll have either a Socialist president or a Catholic in the White House, with Rome twitching the string. Then I shall move to my Venezuelan estates, take the vow of poverty, and turn monk."

"Which reminds me again that by your continued relations with Rome you are doing much to promote just that state of affairs," returned the lawyer sententiously.

"Undoubtedly," said Ames. "But I find the Catholic Church convenient—indeed, necessary—for the promotion of certain plans. And so I use it. The Colombian revolution, for example. But I shall abruptly sever my relations with that institution some day—when I am through with it. At present I am milking the Church to the extent of a brimming pail every year; and as long as the udder is full and accessible I shall continue to tap it. I tapped the Presbyterian Church, through Borwell, last year, if you remember."

Willett, chief secretary to Ames, entered at that moment with the morning mail, opened and sorted, and replies written to letters of such nature as he could attend to without suggestions from his chief.

"By the way," remarked Hood when he saw the letters, "I had word from Collins this morning that he had secured a signed statement from that fellow Marcus, who was crushed in the Avon mills yesterday. Marcus accepted the medical services of our physicians, and died in our hospital. Just before he went off, his wife accepted a settlement of one hundred dollars. Looked big to her, I guess, and was a bird in the hand. So that matter's settled."

"That reminds me," said Ames, looking up from his mail; "we are going to close the mills earlier this year on account of the cotton shortage."

Hood gave a low whistle. "That spells trouble, in capital letters!" he commented. "Four thousand hands idle for three months, I suppose. By George! we just escaped disaster last year, you remember."

"It will be more than three months this time," commented Ames with a knowing look. Then—"Hood, I verily believe you are a coward."

"Well, Mr. Ames," replied the latter slowly, "I certainly would hesitate to do some of the things you do. Yet you seem to get away with them."

"Perk up, Hood," laughed Ames. "I've got real work for you as soon as I get control of C. and R. I'm going to put you in as president, at a salary of one hundred thousand per annum. Then you are going to buy the road for me for about two million dollars, and I'll reorganize and sell to the stockholders for five millions, still retaining control. The road is only a scrap heap, but its control is the first step toward the amalgamation of the trolley interests of New England. Laws are going to be violated, Hood, both in actual letter and in spirit.

But that's your end of the business. It's up to you to get around the Interstate Commerce Commission in any way you can, and buttress this little monopoly against competition and reform-infected legislatures. I don't care what it costs."

"What about Crabbe?" asked Hood dubiously.

"We'll send Crabbe to the Senate," Ames coolly replied.

"You seem to forget that senators are now elected by the people, Mr. Ames."

"I forget nothing, sir. The people are New York City, Buffalo, and Albany. Tammany is New York. And Tammany at present is in my pocket. Buffalo and Albany can be swept by the Catholic vote. And I have that in the upper right hand drawer of my private file. The 'people' will therefore elect to the Senate the man I choose. In fact, I prefer direct election of senators over the former method, for the people are greater fools *ên masse* than any State Legislature that ever assembled."

He took up another letter from the pile on his desk and glanced through it. "From Borwell," he commented. "Protests against the way you nullified the Glaze-Bassett red-light injunction bill. Pretty clever, that, Hood. I really didn't think it was in you."

"Invoking the referendum, you mean?" said Hood, puffing a little with pride.

"Yes. But for that, the passage of the bill would have wiped out the whole red-light district, and quartered the rents I now get from my shacks down there. Now next year we will be better prepared to fight the bill. The press will be with us then—a little cheaper and a trifle more degraded than it is to-day."

A private messenger entered with a cablegram. Ames read it and handed it to his lawyer. "The *Proteus* has reached the African Gold Coast at last," he said. Then he threw back his head and laughed heartily. "Do you know, Hood, the *Proteus* carried two missionaries, sent to the frizzle-topped Zulus by Borwell and his outfit. Deutsch and Company cable that they have arrived."

"But," said Hood in some perplexity, "the cargo of the *Proteus* was rum!"

"Just so," roared Ames; "that's where the joke comes in. I make it a point that every ship of mine that carries a missionary to a foreign field shall also carry a cargo of rum. The combination is one that the Zulu finds simply irresistible!"

"So," commented Hood, "the Church goes down to Egypt for help!"

"Why not?" returned Ames. "I carry the missionaries

free on my rum boats. Great saving to the Board of Foreign Missions, you know."

Hood looked at the man before him in undisguised admiration of his cunning. "And did you likewise send missionaries to China with your opium cargoes?" he asked.

Ames chuckled. "I once sent Borwell himself to Hongkong on a boat loaded to the rails with opium. We had insisted on his taking a needed vacation, and so packed him off to Europe. In Bombay I cabled him to take the *Crotus* to Hongkong, transportation free. That was my last consignment of opium to China, for restrictions had already fallen upon our very Christian England, and the opium traffic was killed. I had plans laid to corner the entire opium business in India, and I'd have cleaned up a hundred million out of it, but for the pressure of public sentiment. However, we're going to educate John Chinaman to substitute whiskey for opium. But now," glancing at the great electric wall clock, "I've wasted enough time with you. By the way, do you know why this Government withheld recognition of the Chinese Republic?"

"No," replied Hood, standing in anticipation.

"Thirty thousand chests of opium," returned Ames laconically. "Value, fifty million dollars."

"Well?"

"Ames and Company had advanced to the English banks of Shanghai and Hongkong half this amount, loaned on the opium. That necessitated a few plain words from me to the President, and a quick trip from Washington to London afterwards to interview his most Christian British Majesty. A very pleasant and profitable trip, Hood, very! Now tell Willett I want him."

Hood threw his chief another look of intense admiration, and left the room. Willett's entrance followed immediately.

"Get Lafelle here some time to-day when I have a vacant hour," commanded Ames. "Cable to acting-Bishop Wenceslas, of Cartagena, and ask him if an American mining company is registered there under the name of Simiti Development Company, and what properties they have and where located. Tell him to cable reply, and follow with detailed letter."

He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. "The Congregation of the Sacred Index has laid the ban on—what's the name of the book?" He drew out a card-index drawer and selected a card, which he tossed to the secretary. "There it is. Get me the book at once." He seemed to muse a while, then went on slowly. "Carlos Madero, of Mexico, is in New York. Learn where he is staying, and arrange an interview for me. Wire Senator Wells, Washington, that the bill for a Children's

Bureau must not be taken from the table. That's final. Wire the Sequana Coal Company that I want their report to-morrow, without fail. Wire Collins, at Avon, to tell the Spinners' Union I have nothing to discuss with them. Now send Hodson in."

As Hood was chief of the Ames legal department, and Willett the chief of his army of secretaries, so Hodson was the captain of his force of brokers, a keen, sagacious trader, whose knowledge of the market and whose ability in the matter of stock trading was almost uncanny.

"What's your selection for to-day, Hodson?" asked Ames, as the man entered.

Hodson laid on his desk three lists of suggested deals on the exchanges of New York, London, and Paris. Ames glanced over them hurriedly, drawing his pencil through certain that did not meet his approval, and substituting others in which for particular reasons he wished to trade that morning. "What's your reason for thinking I ought to buy Public Utilities?" he asked, looking up at his broker.

"They have the letting of the Hudson river tunnel contract," replied Hodson.

Ames studied the broker's face a moment. Then his own brightened, as he began to divine the man's reason. "By George!" he ejaculated, "you think there's quicksand along the proposed route?"

"I know it," said Hodson calmly.

"Pick up ten thousand shares, if you can get them," returned Ames quickly. Then—"I'm going to attend a meeting of the Council of American Grain Exchanges at two to-day. I want you to be just outside the door."

Hodson nodded understandingly. Ames concluded, "I guess that's all. I'm at the bank at ten; at the Board of Trade at ten-thirty; Stock Exchange at eleven; and lunch at Rector's at twelve sharp, returning here immediately afterward."

Hodson again bowed, and left the office to undertake his various commissions.

For the next half hour Ames pored over the morning's quota of letters and messages, making frequent notes, and often turning to the telephone at his hand. Then he summoned a stenographer and rapidly dictated a number of replies. Finally he again called Willett.

"In my next vacant hour, following the one devoted to Lafelle, I want to see Reverend Darius Borwell," he directed. "Also," he continued, "wire Strunz that I want a meeting of the Brewers' Union called at the earliest possible date. By the way, ask Lafelle if he can spend the night with me on board

the *Cossack,* and if so, notify Captain McCall. That will save an hour in the day. Here is a bundle of requests for charity, for contributions to hospitals, orphan asylums, and various homes. Turn them all down, regretfully. H'm! 'Phone to the City Assessor to come over whenever you can arrange an hour and go over my schedule with me. By the way, tell Hood to take steps at once to foreclose on the Bradley estate. Did you find out where Ketchim does his banking?"

"Yes, sir," replied the secretary, "the Commercial State."

"Very well, get the president, Mr. Colson, on the wire."

A few moments later Ames had purchased from the Commercial State bank its note against the Ketchim Realty Company for ten thousand dollars. "I thought Ketchim would be borrowing again," he chuckled, when he had completed the transaction. "His brains are composed of a disastrous mixture of hypocrisy and greed. I've thrown another hook into him now."

At nine forty-five Ames left his private office and descended in his elevator to the banking house on the second floor. He entered the directors' room with a determined carriage, nodding pleasantly to his associates. Taking his seat as chairman, he promptly called the meeting to order.

Some preliminary business occupied the first few minutes, and then Ames announced:

"Gentlemen, when the State of New York offered the public sixty millions of four per cent bonds last week, and I advised you to take them at a premium of six per cent, you objected. I overruled you, and the bank bought the bonds. Within forty-eight hours they were resold at a premium of seven per cent, and the bank cleared six hundred thousand. A fair two days' business. Now let me suggest that the psychology of this transaction is worth your study. A commodity is a drug on the market at one dollar, until somebody is willing to pay a dollar and a half for it. Then a lot of people will want it, until somebody else offers a bid of two. Then the price will soar, and the number of those who covet the article and scramble for it will increase proportionably. Take this thought home with you."

A murmur of admiration rose from the directors. "I think," said one, "that we had better send Mr. Ames to Washington to confer with the President in regard to the proposed currency legislation."

"That is already arranged," put in Ames. "I meet the President next Thursday for a conference on this matter."

"And if he proves intractable?" queried another.

"Why, in that case," returned Ames with a knowing smile,

"I think we had better give him a little lesson to take out of office with him—one that will ruin his second-term hopes—and then close our bank."

From the bank, the Board of Trade, the Stock Exchange, and his luncheon with Senator Gossitch, Ames returned to his office for the private interviews which his chief secretary had arranged. Then followed further consultations with Hood over the daily, weekly, and monthly reports which Ames required from all the various commercial, financial, and mining enterprises in which he was interested; further discussions of plans and schemes; further receipt and transmission of cable, telegraphic, and telephone messages; and meetings with his heads of departments, his captains, lieutenants, and minor officers, to listen to their reports and suggestions, and to deliver his quick, decisive commands, admonitions, and advice. From eight in the morning until, as was his wont, Ames closed his desk and entered his private elevator at five-thirty in the evening, his office flashed with the superenergy of the man, with his intense activity, his decisive words, and his stupendous endeavors, materialistic, absorptive, ruthless endeavors. If one should ask what his day really amounted to, we can but point to these incessant endeavors and their results in augmenting his already vast material interests and his colossal fortune, a fortune which Hood believed ran well over a hundred millions, and which Ames himself knew multiplied that figure by five or ten. And the fortune was increasing at a frightful pace, for he gave nothing, but continually drew to himself, always and ever drawing, accumulating, amassing, and absorbing, and for himself alone.

Snapping his desk shut, he held a brief conversation over the wire with the Beaubien, then descended to his waiting car and was driven hastily to his yacht, the *Cossack,* where Monsignor Lafelle awaited as his guest. It was one of the few pleasures which Ames allowed himself during the warm months, to drop his multifarious interests and spend the night aboard the *Cossack,* generally alone, rocking gently on the restless billows, so typical of his own heaving spirit, as the beautiful craft steamed noiselessly to and fro along the coast, well beyond the roar of the huge *arena* where human beings, formed of dust, yet fatuously believing themselves made in the image of infinite Spirit, strive and sweat, curse and slay, in the struggle to prove their doubtful right to live.

CHAPTER 13

THE *Cossack*, with its great turbines purring like a sleeping kitten, and its twin screws turning lazily, almost imperceptibly in the dark waters, moved through the frosty night like a cloud brooding over the deep. Yet it was a cloud of tremendous potentiality, enwrapping a spirit of energy incarnate. From far aloft its burning eye pierced a channel of light through the murky darkness ahead. In its wake it drew a swell of sparkling phosphorescence, which it carelessly tossed off on either side as a Calif might throw handfuls of glittering coins to his fawning beggars. From somewhere in the structure above, the crackling, hissing wireless mechanism was thrusting its invisible hands out into the night and catching the fleeting messages that were borne on the intangible pulsations of the mysterious ether. From time to time these messages were given form and body, and despatched to the luxurious suite below, where, in the dazzling sheen of silver and cut glass, spread out over richest napery, and glowing beneath a torrent of white light, sat the gigantic being whose will directed the movements of this floating palace.

"You see, Lafelle, I look upon religion with the eye of the cold-blooded business man, without the slightest trace of sentimentalism. From the business standpoint, the Protestant Church is a dead failure. It doesn't get results that are in any way commensurate with its investment. But your Church is a success—from the point of dollars and cents. In fact, in the matter of forming and maintaining a monopoly, I take off my hat to the Vatican. You fellows have got us all beaten. Every day I learn something of value by studying your methods of operating upon the public. And so you see why I take such pleasure in talking with really astute churchmen like yourself."

Monsignor Lafelle studied the man without replying, uncertain just what interpretation to put upon the remark. The Japanese servant was clearing away the remnants of the meal, having first lighted the cigars of the master and guest.

"Now," continued Ames, leaning back in his luxurious chair and musing over his cigar, "the purgatory idea is one of the cleverest schemes ever foisted upon the unthinking masses, and it has proved a veritable Klondike. Gad! if I could think up and put over a thing like that I'd consider myself really possessed of brains."

Lafelle's eyes twinkled. "I fear, Mr. Ames," he replied adroitly, "you do not know your Bible."

"No, that's true. I don't suppose I ever in my life read a whole chapter in the book. I can't swallow such stuff, Lafelle —utterly unreasonable, wholly inconsistent with facts and natural laws, as we know and are able to observe them. Even as a child I never had any use for fairy-tales, or wonder-stories. I always wanted facts, tangible, concrete, irrefutable facts, not hypotheses. The Protestant churches hand out a mess of incoherent guesswork, based on as many interpretations of the Bible as there are human minds sufficiently interested to interpret it, and then wax hot and angry when hard-headed business men like myself refuse to subscribe to it. It's preposterous, Lafelle! If they had anything tangible to offer, it would be different. But I go to church for the looks of the thing, and for business reasons; and then stick pins into myself to keep awake while I listen to pedagogical Borwell tell what he doesn't know about God and man. Then at the close of the service I drop a five-dollar bill into the plate for the entertainment, and go away with the feeling that I didn't get my money's worth. From a business point of view, a Protestant church service is worth about twenty-five cents for the music, and five cents for the privilege of sleeping on a soft cushion. So you see I lose four dollars and seventy cents every time I attend. You Catholic fellows, with your ceremonial and legerdemain, give a much better entertainment. Besides, I like to hear your priests soak it to their cowering flocks."

Lafelle sighed. "I shall have to class you with the incorrigibles," he said with a rueful air. "I am sorry you take such a harsh attitude toward us. We are really more spiritual—"

Ames interrupted with a roar of laughter. "Don't! don't!" he pleaded, holding up a hand. "Why, Lafelle, you old fraud, I look upon your Church as a huge business institution, a gigantic trust, as mercenary and merciless as Steel, Oil, or Tobacco! Why, you and I are in the same business, that of making money! And I'd like to borrow some of your methods. You catch 'em through religion. I have to use other methods. But the end is the same. Only, you've got it over me, for you hurl the weight of centuries of authority upon the poor, trembling public; and I have to beat them down with clubs of my own making. Moreover, the law protects you in all your pious methods; while I have to hire expensive legal talent to get around it."

"You seem to be fairly successful, even at that," retorted Lafelle. Then, too politic to draw his host into an acrimonious argument that might end in straining their now cordial and mutually helpful friendship, he observed, looking at his cigar: "May I ask what you pay for these?—for only an inexhaustible bank reserve can warrant their like."

He had struck the right chord, and Ames softened at once. "These," he said, tenderly regarding the thick, black weed in his fingers, "are grown exclusively for me on my own plantation in Colombia. They cost me about one dollar and sixty-eight cents each, laid down at my door in New York. I searched the world over before I found the only spot where such tobacco could be grown."

"And this wine?" continued Lafelle, lifting his glass of sparkling champagne.

"On a little hillside, scarcely an acre in extent, in Granada, Spain," replied Ames. "I have my own wine press and bottling plant there."

Lafelle could not conceal his admiration for this man of luxury. "And does your exclusiveness extend also to your tea and coffee?" he ventured, smiling.

"It does," said Ames. "I grow tea for my table in both China and Ceylon. And I have exclusive coffee plantations in Java and Brazil. But I'm now negotiating for one in Colombia, for I think that, without doubt, the finest coffee in the world is grown there, although it never gets beyond the coast line."

"*Fortuna non deo,*" murmured the churchman; "you man of chance and destiny!"

Ames laughed genially. "My friend," said he, "I have always insisted that I possessed but a modicum of brains; but I am a gambler. My god is chance. With ordinary judgment and horse-sense, I take risks that no so-called sane man would consider. The curse of the world is fear—the chief instrument that you employ to hold the masses to your churchly system. I was born without it. I know that as long as a business opponent has fear to contend with, I am his master. Fear is at the root of every ailment of mind, body, or environment. I repeat, I know not the meaning of the word. Hence my position in the business world. Hence, also, my freedom from the limitations of superstition, religious or otherwise. Do you get me?"

"Yes," replied Lafelle, drawing a long sigh, "in a sense I do. But you greatly err, my friend, in deprecating your own powerful intellect. I know of no brain but yours that could have put South Ohio Oil from one hundred and fifty dollars up to over two thousand a share. I had a few shares of that stock myself. But I held until it broke."

Ames smiled knowingly. "Sorry I didn't know about it," he said. "I could have saved you. I didn't own a dollar's worth of South Ohio. Oh, yes," he added, as he saw Lafelle's eyes widening in surprise, "I pushed the market up until a certain lady, whom you and I both know, thought it unwise to go further, and then I sprung the sudden discovery of Colom-

bian oil fields on them; and the market crashed like a burst balloon. The lady cleared some two millions on the rig. No, I didn't have a drop of Colombian oil to grease the chute. It was American nerve, that's all."

"Well!" ejaculated Lafelle. "If you had lived in the Middle Ages you'd have been burnt for possessing a devil!"

"On the contrary," quickly amended Ames, his eyes twinkling, "I'd have been made a Cardinal."

Both men laughed over the retort; and then Ames summoned the valet to set in motion the great electrical pipe-organ, and to bring the whiskey and soda.

For the next hour the two men gave themselves up to the supreme luxury of their magnificent environment, the stimulation of their beverage and cigars, and the soothing effect of the soft music, combined with the gentle movement of the boat. Then Ames took his guest into the smoking room proper, and drew up chairs before a small table, on which were various papers and writing materials.

"Now," he began, "referring to your telephone message of this morning, what is it that you want me to do for you? Is it the old question of establishing a nunciature at Washington?"

Lafelle had been impatiently awaiting this moment. He therefore plunged eagerly into his subject. "Mr. Ames," said he, "I know you to have great influence at the Capital. In the interests of humanity, I ask you to use that influence to prevent the passage of the immigration bill which provides for a literacy test."

Ames smiled inwardly. There was no need of this request; for, in the interests, not of humanity, but of his own steamship companies, he intended that there should be no restriction imposed upon immigration. But the Church was again playing into his hands, coming to him for favors. And the Church always paid heavily for his support. "Well! well!" he exclaimed with an assumption of interest, "so you ask me to impugn my own patriotism!"

Lafelle looked perplexed. "I don't quite understand," he said.

"Why," Ames explained, "how long do you figure it will take, with unrestricted immigration, for the Catholics to so outnumber the Protestants in the United States as to establish their religion by law and force it into the schools?"

Lafelle flushed. "But your Constitution provides toleration for all religions!"

"And the Constitution is quite flexible, and wholly subject to amendment, is it not?"

Lafelle flared out in unrestrained anger. "What a bugaboo you Protestants make of Roman Catholicism!" he cried. "Great heavens! Why, one would think that we Catholics were all anarchists! Are we such a menace, such a curse to your Republican institutions? Do you ever stop to realize what the Church has done for civilization, and for your own country? And where, think you, would art and learning be now but for her? Have you any adequate idea what the Church is doing to-day for the poor, for the oppressed? Good God! You Protestants, a thousand times more intolerant than we, treat us as if we were Hindoo pariahs! This whole country is suffering from the delirium of Roman Catholic-phobia! Will you drive us to armed defense?"

"There, my friend, calm yourself," soothed Ames, laying a hand on the irate churchman's arm. "And please do not class me with the Protestants, for I am not one of them. You Catholic fellows have made admirable gains in the past few years, and your steady encroachments have netted you about ninety per cent of all the political offices in and about Washington, so you have no complaint, even if the Church isn't in politics. H'm! So you want my help, eh?"

He stopped and drummed on the table. Meantime, his brain was working rapidly. "By the way, Lafelle," he said, abruptly resuming the conversation, "you know all about church laws and customs, running way back to mediaeval times. Can't you dig up some old provision whereby I can block a fellow who claims to own a gold mine down in Colombia? If you can, I'll see that the President vetoes every obnoxious immigration bill that's introduced this term."

Lafelle roused from his sulk and gulped down his wrath. Ames went on to express his desire for vengeance upon one obscure Philip O. Ketchim, broker, promoter, church elder, and Sunday school superintendent. Lafelle became interested. The conversation grew more and more animated. Hours passed.

Then at length Ames rose and rang for his valet. "My God, Lafelle, the idea's a corker!" he cried, his eyes ablaze. "Where'd you get it?"

Lafelle laughed softly. "From a book entitled 'Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest,' written anonymously, but, they say, by a young attaché of the Vatican who was insane at the time. I never learned his name. However, he was apparently well informed on matters Colombian."

"And what do you call the law?"

"The law of *'en manos muertas'*," replied Lafelle.

"Well," exclaimed Ames, "again I take off my hat to your

churchly system! And now," he continued eagerly, "cable the Pope at once. I'll have the operator send your code ashore by wireless, and the message will go to Rome to-night. Tell the old man you've got influence at work in Washington that is—well, more than strong, and that the prospects for defeating the immigration bill are excellent."

Lafelle arose and stood for a moment looking about the room. "Before I retire, my friend," he said, "I would like to express again the admiration which the tasteful luxury of this smoking room has aroused in me, and to ask, if I may, whether those stained-glass windows up there are merely fanciful portraits?"

Ames quickly glanced up at the faces of the beautiful women portrayed in the rectangular glass windows which lined the room just below the ceiling. They were exquisitely painted, in vivid colors, and so set as to be illuminated during the day by sunlight, and at night by strong electric lamps behind them. "Why do you ask?" he inquired in wonder.

"Because," returned Lafelle, "if I mistake not, I have seen a portrait similar to that one," pointing up at one of the windows, where a sad, wistful face of rare loveliness looked down upon them.

Ames started slightly. "Where, may I ask?" he said in a controlled voice.

Lafelle reflected. In his complete absorption he had not noticed the effect of his query upon Ames. "I do not know," he replied slowly. "London—Paris—Berlin—no, not there. And yet, it was in Europe, I am sure. Ah, I have it! In the Royal Gallery, at Madrid."

Ames stared at him dully. "In the—Royal Gallery—at Madrid!" he echoed in a low tone.

"Yes," continued Lafelle confidently, still studying the portrait, "I am certain of it. But," turning abruptly upon Ames, "you may have known the original?"

Ames had recovered his composure. "I assure you I never had that pleasure," he said lightly. "These art windows were set in by the designer of the yacht. Clever idea, I thought. Adds much to the general effect, don't you think? By the way, if a portrait similar to that one hangs in the Royal Gallery at Madrid, you might try to learn the identity of the original for me. It's quite interesting to feel that one may have the picture of some bewitching member of royalty hanging in his own apartments. By all means try to learn who the lady is—unless you know." He stopped and searched the churchman's face.

But Lafelle shook his head. "No, I do not know her. But—that picture has haunted me from the day I first saw it in the Royal Gallery. Who designed your yacht?"

"Crafts, of 'Storrs and Crafts,'" replied Ames. "But he died a year ago. Storrs is gone, too. No help from that quarter."

Lafelle moved thoughtfully toward the door. The valet appeared at that moment.

"Show Monsignor to his stateroom," commanded Ames. "Good night, Monsignor, good night. Remember, we dock at seven-thirty, sharp."

Returning to the table, Ames sat down and rapidly composed a message for his wireless operator to send across the dark waters to the city, and thence to acting-Bishop Wenceslas, in Cartagena. This done, he extinguished all the lights in the room excepting those which illuminated the stained-glass windows above. Drawing his chair up in front of the one which had stirred Lafelle's query, he sat before it far into the morning, in absorbed contemplation, searching the sad features of the beautiful face, pondering, revolving, sometimes murmuring aloud, sometimes passing a hand across his brow, as if he would erase from a relentless memory an impression made long since and worn ever deeper by the recurrent thought of many years.

CHAPTER 14

ALMOST within the brief period of a year, the barefoot, calico-clad Carmen had been ejected from unknown Simití and dropped into the midst of the pyrotechnical society life of the great New World metropolis. Only an unusual interplay of mental forces could have brought about such an odd result. But that it was a very logical outcome of the reaction upon one another of human ambitions, fears, lust, and greed, operating through the types of mind among which her life had been cast, those who have followed our story thus far can have no doubt. The cusp of the upward-sweeping curve had been reached through the insane eagerness of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to outdo her wealthy society rivals in an arrogant display of dress, living, and vain, luxurious entertaining, and the acquisition of the empty honor attaching to social leadership. The coveted prize was now all but within the shallow woman's grasp. Alas! she knew not that when her itching fingers closed about it the golden bauble would crumble to ashes.

The program as outlined by the Beaubien had been faithfully followed. Mrs. J. Wilton Ames had met Mrs. Hawley-Crowles—whom, of course, she had long desired to know more

intimately—and an interchange of calls had ensued, succeeded by a grand reception at the Ames mansion, the first of the social season. To this Mrs. Hawley-Crowles floated, as upon a cloud, attired in a French gown which cost fifteen hundred dollars, and shoes on her disproportioned feet for which she had rejoiced to pay thirty dollars each, made as they had been from specially selected imported leather, dyed to match her rich robe. It was true, her pleasure had not been wholly unalloyed, for she had been conscious of a trace of superciliousness on the part of some of the gorgeous birds of paradise, twittering and hopping in their hampering skirts about the Ames parlors, and pecking, with milk-fed content, at the rare cakes and ices. But she only held her empty head the higher, and fluttered about the more ostentatiously and clumsily, while anticipating the effect which her charming and talented ward would produce when she should make her bow to these same vain, haughty devotees of the cult of gold. And she had wisely planned that Carmen's *début* should follow that of Kathleen Ames, that it might eclipse her rival's in its wanton display of magnificence.

On the heels of the Ames reception surged the full flood of the winter's social orgy. Early in November Kathleen Ames was duly presented. The occasion was made one of such stupendous display that Mrs. Hawley-Crowles first gasped, then shivered with apprehension, lest she be unable to outdo it. She went home from it in a somewhat chastened frame of mind, and sat down at her *escritoire* to make calculations. Could she on her meager annual income of one hundred and fifty thousand hope to meet the Ames millions? She had already allowed that her wardrobe would cost not less than twenty-five thousand dollars a year, to say nothing of the additional expense of properly dressing Carmen. But she now saw that this amount was hopelessly inadequate. She therefore increased the figure to seventy-five thousand. But that took half of her income. Could she maintain her city home, entertain in the style now demanded by her social position, and spend her summers at Newport, as she had planned? Clearly, not on that amount. No, her income would not suffice; she would be obliged to draw on the principal until Carmen could be married off to some millionaire, or until her own father died. Oh, if he would only terminate his useless existence soon!

But, in lieu of that delayed desideratum, some expedient must be devised at once. She thought of the Beaubien. That obscure, retiring woman was annually making her millions. A tip now and then from her, a word of advice regarding the

market, and her own limited income would expand accordingly. She had not seen the Beaubien since becoming a member of Holy Saints. But on that day, and again, two months later, when the splendid altar to the late lamented and patriotic citizen, the Honorable James Hawley-Crowles, was dedicated, she had marked the woman, heavily veiled, sitting alone in the rear of the great church. What had brought her there? she wondered. She had shuddered as she thought the tall, black-robed figure typified an ominous shadow falling athwart her own foolish existence.

But there was no doubt of Carmen's hold on the strange, tarnished woman. And so, smothering her doubts and pocketing her pride, she again sought the Beaubien, ostensibly in regard to Carmen's forthcoming *début;* and then, very adroitly and off-handedly, she brought up the subject of investments, alleging that the added burden of the young girl now rendered it necessary to increase the rate of interest which her securities were yielding.

The Beaubien proved herself the soul of candor and generosity. Not only did she point out to Mrs. Hawley-Crowles how her modest income might be quadrupled, but she even offered, in such a way as to make it utterly impossible for that lady to take offense, to lend her whatever amount she might need, at any time, to further Carmen's social conquest. And during the conversation she announced that she herself was acting on a suggestion dropped by the great financier, Ames, and was buying certain stocks now being offered by a coming power in world finance, Mr. Philip O. Ketchim.

Why, to be sure, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had heard of this man! Was he not promoting a company in which her sister's husband, and the girl herself, were interested? And if such investments were good enough for a magnate of Ames's standing, they certainly were good enough for her. She would see Mr. Ketchim at once. Indeed, why had she not thought of this before! She would get Carmen to hypothecate her own interest in this new company, if necessary. That interest of itself was worth a fortune.

Quite true. And if Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and Carmen so desired, the Beaubien would advance them whatever they might need on that security alone. Or, she would take the personal notes of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles—"For, you know, my dear," she said sweetly, "when your father passes away you are going to be very well off, indeed, and I can afford to discount that inevitable event somewhat, can I not?" And she not only could, but did.

Then Mrs. Hawley-Crowles soared into the empyrean, and

this self-absorbed woman, who never in her life had earned the equivalent of a single day's food, launched the sweet, white-souled girl of the tropics upon the oozy waters of New York society with such *éclat* that the Sunday newspapers devoted a whole page, profusely illustrated, to the gorgeous event and dilated with much extravagance of expression upon the charms of the little Inca princess, and upon the very important and gratifying fact that the three hundred fashionable guests present displayed jewels to the value of not less than ten million dollars.

The function took the form of a musicale, in which Carmen's rich voice was first made known to the *beau monde*. The girl instantly swept her auditors from their feet. The splendid pipe-organ, which Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had hurriedly installed for the occasion, became a thing inspired under her deft touch. It seemed in that garish display of worldliness to voice her soul's purity, its wonder, its astonishment, its lament over the vacuities of this highest type of human society, its ominous threats of thundered denunciation on the day when her tongue should be loosed and the present mesmeric spell broken—for she was under a spell, even that of this new world of tinsel and material veneer.

The decrepit old Mrs. Gannette wept on Carmen's shoulder, and went home vowing that she would be a better woman and cut out her night-cap of Scotch-and-soda. Others crowded about the girl and showered their fulsome praise upon her. But not so Mrs. Ames and her daughter Kathleen. They stared at the lovely *débutante* with wonder and chagrin written legibly upon their bepowdered visages. And before the close of the function Kathleen had become so angrily jealous that she was grossly rude to Carmen when she bade her good night. For her own feeble light had been drowned in the powerful radiance of the girl from Simití. And from that moment the assassination of the character of the little Inca princess was decreed.

But, what with incessant striving to adapt herself to her environment, that she might search its farthest nook and angle; what with ceaseless efforts to check her almost momentary impulse to cry out against the vulgar display of modernity and the vicious inequity of privilege which she saw on every hand; what with her purity of thought; her rare ideals and selfless motives; her boundless love for humanity; and her passionate desire to so live her "message" that all the world might see and light their lamps at the torch of her burning love for God and her fellow-men, Carmen found her days a paradox, in that they were literally full of emptiness. After her *début*, event

followed event in the social life of the now thoroughly gay metropolis, and the poor child found herself hustled home from one function, only to change her attire and hurry again, weary of spirit, into the waiting car, to be whisked off to another equally vapid. It seemed to the bewildered girl that she would never learn what was *de rigueur;* what conventions must be observed at one social event, but amended at another. Her tight gowns and limb-hampering skirts typified the soul-limitation of her tinsel environment; her high-heeled shoes were exquisite torture; and her corsets, which her French maid drew until the poor girl gasped for air, seemed to her the cruellest device ever fashioned by the vacuous, enslaved human mind. Frequently she changed her clothing completely three and four times a day to meet her social demands. Night became day; and she had to learn to sleep until noon. She found no time for study; none even for reading. And conversation, such as was indulged under the Hawley-Crowles roof, was confined to insipid society happenings, with frequent sprinklings of racy items anent divorce, scandal, murder, or the debauch of manhood. From this she drew more and more aloof and became daily quieter.

It was seldom, too, that she could escape from the jaded circle of society revelers long enough to spend a quiet hour with the Beaubien. But when she could, she would open the reservoirs of her soul and give full vent to her pent-up emotions. "Oh," she would often exclaim, as she sat at the feet of the Beaubien in the quiet of the darkened music room, and gazed into the crackling fire, "how can they—how can they!"

Then the Beaubien would pat her soft, glowing cheek and murmur, "Wait, dearie, wait." And the tired girl would sigh and close her eyes and dream of the quiet of little Simití and of the dear ones there from whom she now heard no word, and yet whom she might not seek, because of the war which raged about her lowly birthplace.

The gay season was hardly a month advanced when Mrs. Ames angrily admitted to herself that her own crown was in gravest danger. The South American girl—and because of her, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her blasé sister—had completely captured New York's conspicuous circle. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles apparently did not lack for funds, but entertained with a display of reckless disregard for expense, and a carelessness of critical comment, that stirred the city to its depths and aroused expressions of wonder and admiration on every hand. The newspapers were full of her and her charming ward. Surely, if the girl's social prestige continued to soar, the Ames family soon would be relegated to the social "has-beens." And Mrs.

Ames and her haughty daughter held many a serious conference over their dubious prospects.

Ames himself chuckled. Night after night, when the Beaubien's dinner guests had dispersed, he would linger to discuss the social war now in full progress, and to exchange with her witty comments on the successes of the combatants. One night he announced, "Lafelle is in England; and when he returns he is coming by way of the West Indies. I shall cable him to stop for a week at Cartagena, to see Wenceslas on a little matter of business for me."

The Beaubien smiled her comprehension. "Mrs. Hawley-Crowles has become nicely enmeshed in his net," she returned. "The altar to friend Jim is a beauty. Also, I hear that she is going to finance Ketchim's mining company in Colombia."

"Fine!" said Ames. "I learned to-day that Ketchim's engineer, Harris, has returned to the States. Couldn't get up the Magdalena river, on account of the fighting. There will be nothing doing there for a year yet."

"Just as well," commented the Beaubien. Then abruptly —"By the way, I now hold Mrs. Hawley-Crowles's notes to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I want you to buy them from me and be ready to turn the screws when I tell you."

Ames roared with laughter. "Shrewd girl!" he exclaimed, pinching her cheek. "All right. I'll take them off your hands to-morrow. And by the way, I must meet this Carmen."

"You let her alone," said the Beaubien quickly in a low voice.

Ames wondered vaguely what she meant.

* * * * * *

The inauguration of the Grand Opera season opened to Mrs. Hawley-Crowles another avenue for her astonishing social activities. With rare shrewdness she had contrived to outwit Mrs. Ames and secure the center box in the "golden horseshoe" at the Metropolitan. There, like a gaudy garden spider in its glittering web, she sat on the opening night, with her rapt *protégée* at her side, and sent her insolent challenge broadcast. Multimillionaires and their haughty, full-toileted dames were ranged on either side of her, brewers and packers, distillers and patent medicine concoctors, railroad magnates and Board of Trade plungers, some under indictment, others under the shadow of death, all under the mesmeric charm of gold. In the box at her left sat the Ames family, with their newly arrived guests, the Dowager Duchess of Altern and her son. Though inwardly boiling, Mrs. Ames was smiling and affable when she exchanged calls with the gorgeous occupants of the Hawley-Crowles box.

"So chawmed to meet you," murmured the heir of Altern, a callow youth of twenty-three, bowing over the dainty, gloved hand of Carmen. Then, as he adjusted his monocle and fixed his jaded eyes upon the fresh young girl, "Bah Jove!"

The gigantic form of Ames wedged in between the young man and Carmen. "I've heard a lot about you," he said genially, in a heavy voice that harmonized well with his huge frame; "but we haven't had an opportunity to get acquainted until to-night."

For some moments he stood holding her hand and looking steadily at her. The girl gazed up at him with her trustful brown eyes alight, and a smile playing about her mouth. "My, but you are big!" she naïvely exclaimed.

While she chatted brightly Ames held her hand and laughed at her frank, often witty, remarks. But then a curious, eager look came into his face, and he became quiet and reflective. He seemed unable to take his eyes from her. And when the girl gently drew her hand from his he laughed again, nervously.

"I—I know something about Colombia," he said, "and speak the language a bit. We'll have to get together often, so's I can brush up."

Then, apparently noticing Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her sister for the first time—"Oh, so glad to see you both! Camorso's in fine voice to-night, eh?"

He wheeled about and stood again looking at Carmen, until she blushed under his close gaze and turned her head away. Then he went back to his box. But throughout the evening, whenever the girl looked in the direction of the Ames family, she met the steady, piercing gaze of the man's keen gray eyes. And they seemed to her like sharp steel points, cutting into the portals of her soul.

Night after night during the long season Carmen sat in the box and studied the operas that were produced on the boards before her wondering gaze. Always Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was with her. And generally, too, the young heir of Altern was there, occupying the chair next to the girl—which was quite as the solicitous Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had planned.

"Aw—deucedly fine show to-night, Miss Carmen," the youth ventured one evening, as he took his accustomed place close to her.

"The music is always beautiful," the girl responded. "But the play, like most of Grand Opera, is drawn from the darkest side of human life. It is a sordid picture of licentiousness and cruelty. Only for its setting in wonderful music, Grand Opera is generally such a depiction of sex-passion, of lust and murder, that it would not be permitted on the stage. A few years

from now people will be horrified to remember that the preceding generation reveled in such blood scenes—just as we now speak with horror of the gladiatorial contests in ancient Rome."

The young man regarded her uncertainly. "But—aw—Miss Carmen," he hazarded, "we must be true to life, you know!" Having delivered himself of this oracular statement, the youth adjusted his monocle and settled back as if he had given finality to a weighty argument.

The girl looked at him pityingly. "You voice the cant of the modern writer, 'true to life.' True to the horrible, human sense of life, that looks no higher than the lust of blood, and is satisfied with it, I admit. True to the unreal, temporal sense of existence, that is here to-day, and to-morrow has gone out in the agony of self-imposed suffering and death. True to that awful, false sense of life which we must put off if we would ever rise into the consciousness of *real* life, I grant you. But the production of these horrors on the stage, even in a framework of marvelous music, serves only to hold before us the awful models from which we must turn if we would hew out a better existence. Are you the better for seeing an exhibition of wanton murder on the stage, even though the participants wondrously sing their words of vengeance and passion?"

"But—aw—they serve as warnings; they show us the things we ought not to do, don't you know."

She smiled. "The sculptor who would chisel a beautiful form, does he set before him the misshapen body of a hunchback, in order that he may see what not to carve?" she asked. "And we who would transform the human sense of life into one of freedom from evil, can we build a perfect structure with such grewsome models as this before us? You don't see it now," she sighed; "you are in the world, and of it; and the world is deeply under the mesmeric belief of evil as a stern reality. But the day is coming when our musicians and authors will turn from such base material as this to nobler themes —themes which will excite our wonder and admiration, and stimulate the desire for purity of thought and deed—themes that will be beacon lights, and true guides. You don't understand. But you will, some day."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles frowned heavily as she listened to this conversation, and she drew a sigh of relief when Carmen, sensing the futility of any attempt to impress her thought upon the young man, turned to topics which he could discuss with some degree of intelligence.

Late in the evening Ames dropped in and came directly to the Hawley-Crowles box. He brought a huge box of imported

candy and a gorgeous bouquet of orchids, which he presented to Carmen. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles beamed upon him like the effulgent midday sun.

"Kathleen wants you, Reggy," Ames abruptly announced to the young man, whose lips were molding into a pout. "Little gathering up at the house. Take my car." His huge bulk loomed over the younger man like a mountain as he took him by the shoulders and turned him toward the exit.

"But I wish to see the opera!" protested the youth, with a vain show of resistance.

Ames said nothing; but his domineering personality forced the boy out of the box and into the corridor.

"But—Uncle Wilton—!"

Ames laughed curtly. Then he took the seat which his evicted nephew had vacated, and bent over Carmen. With a final hopeless survey of the situation, Reginald turned and descended to the cloak room, muttering dire but futile threats against his irresistible relative.

"Now, little girl!" Ames's manner unconsciously assumed an air of patronage. "This is the first real opportunity I've had to talk with you. Tell me, what do you think of New York?"

Carmen smiled up at him. "Well," she began uncertainly, "since I have thawed out, or perhaps have become more accustomed to the cold, I have begun to make mental notes. Already I have thousands of them. But they are not yet classified, and so I can hardly answer your question, Mr. Ames. But I am sure of one thing, and that is that for the first few months I was here I was too cold to even think!"

Ames laughed. "Yes," he agreed, "the change from the tropics was somewhat abrupt. But, aside from the climate?"

"It is like awaking from a deep sleep," answered Carmen meditatively. "In Simití we dream our lives away. In New York all is action; loud words; harsh commands; hurry; rush; endeavor, terrible, materialistic endeavor! Every person I see seems to be going somewhere. He may not know where he is going—but he is on the way. He may not know why he is going—but he must not be stopped. He has so few years to live; and he must pile up money before he goes. He must own an automobile; he must do certain things which his more fortunate neighbor does, before his little flame of life goes out and darkness falls upon him. I sometimes think that people here are trying to get away from themselves, but they don't know it. I think they come to the opera because they crave any sort of diversion that will make them forget themselves for a few moments, don't you?"

"H'm! well, I can't say," was Ames's meaningless reply, as he sat regarding the girl curiously.

"And," she continued, as if pleased to have an auditor who at least pretended to understand her, "the thing that now strikes me most forcibly is the great confusion that prevails here in everything, in your government, in your laws, in your business, in your society, and, in particular, in your religion. Why, in that you have hundreds of sects claiming a monopoly of truth; you have hundreds of churches, hundreds of religious or theological beliefs, hundreds of differing concepts of God—but you get nowhere! Why, it has come to such a pass that, if Jesus were to appear physically on earth to-day, I am sure he would be evicted from his own Church!"

"Well, yes, I guess that's so," commented Ames, quite at sea in such conversation. "But we solid business men have found that religious emotion never gets a man anywhere. It's weakening. Makes a man effeminate, and utterly unfits him for business. I wouldn't have a man in my employ who was a religious enthusiast."

"But Jesus was a religious enthusiast," she protested.

"I doubt if there ever was such a person," he answered dryly.

"Why, the Bible—"

"Is the most unfortunate and most misunderstood piece of literature ever written," he interrupted. "And the Church, well, I regard it as the greatest fraud ever perpetrated upon the human race."

"You mean that to apply to every church?"

"It fits them all."

She studied his face for a few moments. He returned her glance as steadily. But their thoughts were running in widely divergent channels. The conversational topic of the moment had no interest whatsoever for the man. But this brilliant, sparkling girl—there was something in those dark eyes, that soft voice, that brown hair—by what anomaly did this beautiful creature come out of desolate, mediaeval Simití?

"Mr. Ames, you do not know what religion is."

"No? Well, and what is it?"

"It is that which binds us to God."

"And that?"

"Love."

No, he knew not the meaning of the word. Or—wait—did he? His thought broke restraint and flew wildly back—but he caught it, and rudely forced it into its wonted channel. But, did he love his fellow-men? Certainly not! What would that profit him in dollars and cents? Did he love his wife? his

children? The thought brought a cynical laugh to his lips. Carmen looked up at him wonderingly. "You will have to, you know," she said quixotically.

Then she reached out a hand and laid it on his. He looked down at it, so soft, so white, so small, and he contrasted it with the huge, hairy bulk of his own. This little girl was drawing him. He felt it, felt himself yielding. He was beginning to look beyond the beautiful features, the rare grace and charm of physical personality, which had at first attracted only the baser qualities of his nature, and was seeing glimpses of a spiritual something which lay back of all that—infinitely more beautiful, unspeakably richer, divine, sacred, untouchable.

"Of course you will attend the Charity Ball, Mr. Ames?" The thin voice of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles jarred upon his ear like a shrill discord. Ames turned savagely upon her. Then he quickly found himself again.

"No," he laughed harshly. "But I shall be represented by my family. And you?" He looked at Carmen.

"Most assuredly," returned Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, taking the query to herself. "That is, if my French dressmaker does not fail me. She is dreadfully exasperating! What will Mrs. Ames wear, do you think?" She arched her brows at him as she propounded this innocent question.

Ames chuckled. "I'll tell you what it is this year," he sagely replied. "It's diamonds in the heels!" He gave a sententious nod of his head. "I overheard Kathleen and her mother discussing plans. And—do you want to know next season's innovation? By George! I'm a regular spy." He stopped and laughed heartily at his own treasonable deceit.

"Yes! yes!" whispered Mrs. Hawley-Crowles eagerly, as she drew her chair closer. "What is it?"

"One condition," replied Ames, holding up a thick finger.

"Of course! Anything!" returned the grasping woman.

"Well, I want to get better acquainted with your charming ward," he whispered.

"Of course; and I want you to know her better. That can be arranged very easily. Now what's the innovation?"

"Colored wigs," said Ames, with a knowing look.

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles settled back with a smile of supreme satisfaction. She would boldly anticipate next season at the coming Charity Ball. Then, leaning over toward Ames, she laid her fan upon his arm. "Can't you manage to come and see us some time, my sister and Carmen? Any time," she added. "Just call me up a little in advance."

The blare of trumpets and the crash of drums drew their

attention again to the stage. Ames rose and bowed his departure. A business associate in a distant box had beckoned him. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles dismissed him reluctantly; then turned her wandering attention to the play.

But Carmen sat shrouded in thoughts that were not stimulated by the puppet-show before her. The tenor shrieked out his tender passion, and the tubby soprano sank into his inadequate arms with languishing sighs. Carmen heeded not their stage amours. She saw in the glare before her the care-lined face of the priest of Simití; she saw the grim features and set jaw of her beloved, black-faced Rosendo, as he led her through the dripping jungle; she saw Anita's blind, helpless babe; she saw the little newsboy of Cartagena; and her heart welled with a great love for them all; and she buried her face in her hands and wept softly.

CHAPTER 15

"WAIT, my little princess, wait," the Beaubien had said, when Carmen, her eyes flowing and her lips quivering, had again thrown herself into that strange woman's arms and poured out her heart's surcease. "It will not be long now. I think I see the clouds forming."

"I want to go back to Simití, to Padre José, to my home," wailed the girl. "I don't understand the ways and the thoughts of these people. They don't know God—they don't know what love is—they don't know anything but money, and clothes, and sin, and death. When I am with them I gasp, I choke—"

"Yes, dearest, I understand," murmured the woman softly, as she stroked the brown head nestling upon her shoulder. "It is social asphyxia. And many even of the 'four hundred' are suffering from the same disease; but they would die rather than admit it. Poor, blind fools!"

To no one could the attraction which had drawn Carmen and the Beaubien together seem stranger, more inexplicable, than to that lone woman herself. Yet it existed, irresistible. And both acknowledged it, nor would have had it otherwise. To Carmen, the Beaubien was a sympathetic confidante and a wise counselor. The girl knew nothing of the woman's past or present life. She tried to see in her only the reality which she sought in every individual—the reality which she felt that Jesus must have seen clearly back of every frail mortal concept of humanity. And in doing this, who knows?—she may have transformed the sordid, soiled woman of the world into

something more than a broken semblance of the image of God. To the Beaubien, this rare child, the symbol of love, of purity, had become a divine talisman, touching a dead soul into a sense of life before unknown. If Carmen leaned upon her, she, on the other hand, bent daily closer to the beautiful girl; opened her slowly warming heart daily wider to her; twined her lonely arms daily closer about the radiant creature who had come so unexpectedly into her empty, sinful life.

"But, mother dear"—the Beaubien had long since begged Carmen always to address her thus when they were sharing alone these hours of confidence—"they will not listen to my message! They laugh and jest about real things!"

"True, dearie. And yet you tell me that the Bible says wise men laughed at the great teacher, Jesus."

"Oh, yes! And his message—oh, mother dearest, his message would have helped them so, if they had only accepted it! It would have changed their lives, healed their diseases, and saved them from death. And my message"—her lip quivered —"my message is only his—it is the message of love. But they won't let me tell it."

"Then, sweet, live it. They can not prevent that, can they?"

"I do live it. But—I am so out of place among them. They scoff at real things. They mock all that is noble. Their talk is so coarse, so low and degraded. They have no culture. They worship money. They don't know what miserable failures they all are. And Mrs. Hawley-Crowles—"

The Beaubien's jaw set. "The social cormorant!" she muttered.

"—she will not let me speak of God in her house. She told me to keep my views to myself and never voice them to her friends. And she says I must marry either a millionaire or a foreign noble."

"Humph! And become a snobbish expatriate! Marry a decadent count, and then shake the dust of this democratic country from your feet forever! Go to London or Paris or Vienna, and wear tiaras and coronets, and speak of disgraceful, boorish America in hushed whispers! The empty-headed fool! She forgets that the tarnished name she bears was dragged up out of the ruck of the impecunious by me when I received Jim Crowles into my house! And that I gave him what little gloss he was able to take on!"

"Mother dear—I would leave them—only, they need love, oh, so much!"

The Beaubien strained her to her bosom. "They need you, dearie; they little realize how they need you! I, myself, did not know until you came to me. There, I didn't mean to let

those tears get away from me." She laughed softly as Carmen looked up anxiously into her face. "Now come," she went on brightly, "we must plan for the Charity Ball."

A look of pain swept over the girl's face. The Beaubien bent and kissed her. "Wait, dearie," she repeated. "You will not leave society voluntarily. Keep your light burning. They can not extinguish it. They will light their own lamps at yours—or they will thrust you from their doors. And then," she muttered, as her teeth snapped together, "you will come to me."

Close on the heels of the opera season followed the Charity Ball, the Horse Show, and the Fashion Show in rapid succession, with numberless receptions, formal parties, and nondescript social junketings interspersed. During these fleeting hours of splash and glitter Mrs. Hawley-Crowles trod the air with the sang-froid and exhilaration of an expert aviator. Backed by the Beaubien millions, and with the wonderful South American girl always at her right hand, the worldly ambitious woman swept everything before her, cut a social swath far wider than the glowering Mrs. Ames had ever attempted, and marched straight to the goal of social leadership, almost without interference. She had apparently achieved other successes, too, of the first importance. She had secured the assistance of Ames himself in matters pertaining to her finances; and the Beaubien was actively coöperating with her in the social advancement of Carmen. It is true, she gasped whenever her thought wandered to her notes which the Beaubien held, notes which demanded every penny of her principal as collateral. And she often meditated very soberly over the large sums which she had put into the purchase of Simití stock, at the whispered suggestions of Ames, and under the irresistibly pious and persuasive eloquence of Philip O. Ketchim, now president of that flourishing but as yet non-productive company. But then, one day, an idea occurred to her, and she forthwith summoned Carmen into the library.

"You see, my dear," she said, after expounding to the girl certain of her thoughts anent the famous mine, "I do not want Mr. Ketchim to have any claim upon you for the expense which he incurred on account of your six months in the Elwin school. That thought, as well as others relating to your complete protection, makes it seem advisable that you transfer to me your share in the mine, or in the Simití company. See, I give you a receipt for the same, showing that you have done this as part payment for the great expense to which I have been put in introducing you to society and in providing for your wants here. It is merely formal, of course. And it keeps your share

still in our family, of which you are and always will be a member; but yet removes all liability from you. Of course, you know nothing about business matters, and so you must trust me implicitly. Which I am sure you do, in view of what I have done for you, don't you, dear?"

Of course Carmen did; and of course she unhesitatingly transferred her claim on La Libertad to the worthy Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. Whereupon the good woman tenderly kissed the innocent child, and clasped a string of rich pearls about the slender, white neck. And Carmen later told the Beaubien, who said nothing, but frowned darkly as she repeated the tidings over her private wire to J. Wilton Ames. But that priest of finance only chuckled and exclaimed: "Excellent, my dear! Couldn't be better! By the way, I had a cable from Lafelle this morning, from Cartagena. Oh, yes, everything's all right. Good-bye." But the Beaubien hung up the receiver with a presentiment that everything was far from right, despite his bland assurance. And she regretted bitterly now that she had not warned Carmen against this very thing.

The Charity Ball that season was doubtless the most brilliant function of its kind ever held among a people who deny the impossible. The newspapers had long vied with one another in their advertisements and predictions; they afterward strove mightily to outdo themselves in their vivid descriptions of the gorgeous *fête*. The decorative effects far excelled anything ever attempted in the name of "practical" charity. The display of gowns had never before been even closely approximated. The scintillations from jewels whose value mounted into millions was like the continuous flash of the electric spark. And the huge assemblage embraced the very cream of the nobility, the aristocracy, the rich and exclusive caste of a great people whose Constitution is founded on the equality of men, and who are wont to gather thus annually for a few hours to parade their material vestments and divert their dispirited mentalities under the guise of benefaction to a class for whom they rarely hold a loving thought.

Again the subtle Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had planned and executed a *coup*. Mrs. Ames had subscribed the munificent sum of twenty-five thousand dollars to charity a week before the ball. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had waited for this. Then she gloated as she telephoned to the various newspaper offices that her subscription would be fifty thousand. Did she give a new note to the Beaubien for this amount? That she did—and she obtained the money on the condition that the little Inca princess should lead the grand march. Of course, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles knew that she must gracefully yield first place

to the South American girl; and yet she contrived to score a triumph in apparent defeat. For, stung beyond endurance, Mrs. Ames and her daughter Kathleen at the last moment refused to attend the function, alleging fatigue from a season unusually exacting. The wily Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had previously secured the languid young Duke of Altern as a partner for Carmen—and then was most agreeably thwarted by Ames himself, who, learning that his wife and daughter would not attend, abruptly announced that he himself would lead the march with Carmen.

Why not? Was it not quite proper that the city's leading man of finance should, in the absence of his wife and daughter, and with their full and gratuitous permission—nay, at their urgent request, so it was told—lead with this fair young damsel, this tropical flower, who, as rumor had it, was doubtless a descendant of the royal dwellers in ancient Cuzco?

"Quite proper, *O tempora, O mores!*" murmured one Amos A. Hitt, erstwhile Presbyterian divine, explorer, and gentleman of leisure, as he settled back in his armchair in the fashionable Weltmore apartments and exhaled a long stream of tobacco smoke through his wide nostrils. "And, if I can procure a ticket, I shall give myself the pleasure of witnessing this sacred spectacle, produced under the deceptive mask of charity," he added.

In vain the Beaubien labored with Ames when she learned of his intention—though she said nothing to Carmen. Ames had yielded to her previously expressed wish that he refrain from calling at the Hawley-Crowles mansion, or attempting to force his attentions upon the young girl. But in this matter he remained characteristically obdurate. And thereby a little rift was started. For the angry Beaubien, striving to shield the innocent girl, had vented her abundant wrath upon the affable Ames, and had concluded her denunciation with a hint of possible exposure of certain dark facts of which she was sole custodian. Ames smiled, bowed, and courteously kissed her hand, as he left her stormy presence; but he did not yield. And Carmen went to the Ball.

Through the perfumed air and the garish light tore the crashing notes of the great band. The loud hum of voices ceased, and all eyes turned to the leaders of the grand march, as they stepped forth at one end of the great auditorium. Then an involuntary murmur arose from the multitude—a murmur of admiration, of astonishment, of envy. The gigantic form of Ames stood like a towering pillar, the embodiment of potential force, the epitome of human power, physical and mental. His massive shoulders were thrown back as if in haughty defiance

of comment, critical or commendatory. The smile which flitted about his strong, clean-shaven face bespoke the same caution as the gentle uplifting of a tiger's paw—behind it lay all that was humanly terrible, cunning, heartless, and yet, in a sense, fascinating. His thick, brown hair, scarcely touched with gray, lay about his great head like a lion's mane. He raised a hand and gently pushed it back over the lofty brow. Then he bent and offered an arm to the slender wisp of a girl at his side.

"Good God!" murmured a tall, angular man in the crowd. "Who is she?"

"I don't know, Hitt," replied the friend addressed. "But they say she belongs to the Inca race."

The graceful girl moving by the side of her giant escort seemed like a slender ray of light, a radiant, elfish form, transparent, intangible, gliding softly along with a huge, black shadow. She was simply clad, all in white. About her neck hung a string of pearls, and at her waist she wore the rare orchids which Ames had sent her that afternoon. But no one saw her dress. No one marked the pure simplicity of her attire. The absence of sparkling jewels and resplendent raiment evoked no comment. The multitude saw but her wonderful face; her big eyes, uplifted in trustful innocence to the massive form at her side; her rich brown hair, which glittered like string-gold in the strong light that fell in torrents upon it.

"Hitt, she isn't human! There's a nimbus about her head!"

"I could almost believe it," whispered that gentleman, straining his long neck as she passed before him. "God! has she fallen into Ames's net?"

Immediately behind Carmen and Ames strode the enraptured Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, who saw not, neither heard, and who longed for no further taste of heaven than this stupendous triumph which she had won for herself and the girl. Her heavy, unshapely form was squeezed into a marvelous costume of gold brocade. A double ballet ruffle of stiff white tulle encircled it about the hips as a drapery. The bodice was of heavy gold net. A pleated band of pale moire, in a delicate shade of pink, crossed the left shoulder and was caught at the waist in a large rose bow, ambassadorial style. A double necklace of diamonds, one bearing a great pendant of emeralds, and the other an alternation of emeralds and diamonds, encircled her short, thick neck. A diamond coronet fitted well around her wonderful amber-colored wig—for, true to her determination, she had anticipated the now *passée* Mrs. Ames and had boldly launched the innovation of colored wigs among the smart set. An ivory, hand-painted fan, of great value, dangled from her thick wrist. And, as she lifted her skirts to an un-

necessary height, the gaping people caught the glitter of a row of diamonds in each high, gilded heel.

At her side the young Duke of Altern shuffled, his long, thin body curved like a kangaroo, and his monocle bent superciliously upon the mass of common clay about him. "Aw, beastly crush, ye know," he murmured from time to time to the unhearing dame at his right. And then, as she replied not, he fell to wondering if she fully realized who he was.

Around and across the great hall the gorgeous pageant swept. The big-mouthed horns bellowed forth their noisy harmony. In the distant corridors great illuminated fountains softly plashed. At the tables beyond, sedulous, touting waiters were hurriedly extracting corks from frosted bottle necks. The rare porcelain and cut glass shone and glittered in rainbow tints. The revelers waxed increasingly merry and carefree as they lightly discussed poverty over rich viands and sparkling Burgundy. Still further beyond, the massive oak doors, with their leaded-glass panes, shut out the dark night and the bitter blasts of winter. And they shut out, too, another, but none the less unreal, externalization of the mortal thought which has found expression in a social system "too wicked for a smile."

"God, no—I'd get arrested! I can't!"

The frail, hungry woman who stood before the great doors clutched her wretched shawl closer about her thin shoulders. Her teeth chattered as she stood shivering in the chill wind. Then she hurried away.

At the corner of the building the cold blast almost swept her off her feet. A man, dirty and unkempt, who had been waiting in an alley, ran out and seized her.

"I say, Jude, ain't ye goin' in? Git arrested—ye'd spend the night in a warm cell, an' that's better'n our bunk, ain't it?"

"I'm goin' to French Lucy's," the woman whispered hoarsely. "I'm dead beat!"

"Huh! Ye've lost yer looks, Jude, an' ol' Lucy ain't a-goin' to take ye in. We gotta snipe somepin quick—or starve! Look, we'll go down to Mike's place, an' then come back here when it's out, and ye kin pinch a string, or somepin, eh? Gawd, it's cold!"

The woman glanced back at the lights. For a moment she stood listening to the music from within. A sob shook her, and she began to cough violently. The man took her arm, not unkindly; and together they moved away into the night.

* * * * * *

"Well, little girl, at last we are alone. Now we can exchange confidences." It was Ames talking. He had, late in

the evening, secured seats well hidden behind a mass of palms, and thither had led Carmen. "What do you think of it all? Quite a show, eh? Ever see anything like this in Simití?"

Carmen looked up at him. She thought him wonderfully handsome. She was glad to get away for a moment from the crowd, from the confusion, and from the unwelcome attentions of the now thoroughly smitten young Duke of Altern.

"No," she finally made answer, "I didn't know there were such things in the world."

Ames laughed pleasantly. How refreshing was this ingenuous girl! And what a discovery for him! A new toy—one that would last a long time. But he must be careful of her.

"Yes," he went on genially, "I'll wager there's millions of dollars' worth of jewelry here to-night."

"Oh!" gasped Carmen. "And are the people going to sell it and give the money to the poor?"

"Sell it! Ha! ha! Well, I should say not!"

"But—this is a—a charity—"

"Oh, I see. Quite so. No, it's the money derived from the sale of tickets that goes to the poor."

"And how much is that?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"But—aren't you interested in the poor?"

"Of course, of course," he hastened to assure her, in his easy casual tone.

For a long time the girl sat reflecting, while he studied her, speculating eagerly on her next remark. Then it came abruptly:

"Mr. Ames, I have thought a great deal about it, and I think you people by your charity, such as this, only make more charity necessary. Why don't you do away with poverty altogether?"

"Do away with it? Well, that's quite impossible, you know. 'The poor ye have always with you', eh? You see, I know my Bible."

She threw him a glance of astonishment. He was mocking her! She was deeply serious, for charity to her meant love, and love was all in all.

"No," she finally replied, shaking her head, "you do *not* know your Bible. It is the poor thought that you have always with you, the thought of separation from good. And that thought becomes manifested outwardly in what is called poverty."

He regarded her quizzically, while a smile played about his mouth.

"Why don't you get at the very root of the trouble, and de-

stroy the poverty-thought, the thought that there can be any separation from God, who is infinite good?" she continued earnestly.

"Well, my dear girl, as for me, I don't know anything about God. As for you, well, you are very innocent in worldly matters. Poverty, like death, is inevitable, you know."

"You are mistaken," she said simply. "Neither is inevitable."

"Well, well," he returned brightly, "that's good news! Then there is no such thing as 'the survival of the fittest,' and the weak needn't necessarily sink, eh?"

She looked him squarely in the eyes. "Do you consider, Mr. Ames, that you have survived as one of the fittest?"

"H'm! Well, now—what would you say about that?"

"I should say decidedly no," was the blunt reply.

A dark shade crossed his face, and he bit his lip. People did not generally talk thus to him. And yet—this wisp of a girl! Pshaw! She was very amusing. And, heavens above! how beautiful, as she sat there beside him, her head erect, and her face delicately flushed. He reached over and took her hand. Instantly she drew it away.

"You are the kind," she went on, "who give money to the poor, and then take it away from them again. All the money which these rich people here to-night are giving to charity has been wrested from the poor. And you give only a part of it back to them, at that. This Ball is just a show, a show of dress and jewels. Why, it only sets an example which makes others unhappy, envious, and discontented. Don't you see that? You ought to."

"My dear little girl," he said in a patronizing tone, "don't you think you are assuming a great deal? I'm sure I'm not half so bad as you paint me."

Carmen smiled. "Well, the money you give away has got to come from some source, hasn't it? And you manipulate the stock market and put through wheat corners and all that, and catch the poor people and take their money from them! Charity is love. But your idea of charity makes me pity you. Up here I find a man can pile up hundreds of millions by stifling competition, by debauching legislatures, by piracy and legalized theft, and then give a tenth of it to found a university, and so atone for his crimes. That is called charity. Oh, I know a lot about such things! I've been studying and thinking a great deal since I came to the United States."

"Have you come with a mission?" he bantered. And there was a touch of aspersion in his voice.

"I've come with a message," she replied eagerly.

"Well," he said sharply, "let me warn and advise you: don't join the ranks of the muck-rakers, as most ambitious reformers with messages do. We've plenty of 'em now. I can tear down as easily as you or anybody else. But to build something better is entirely another matter."

"But, Mr. Ames, I've got something better!"

"Yes?" His tone spoke incredulous irony. "Well, what is it, if I may ask?"

"Love."

"Love, eh? Well, perhaps that's so," he said, bending toward her and again attempting to take her hand.

"I guess," she said, drawing back quickly, "you don't know what love is, do you?"

"No," he whispered softly. "I don't really believe I do. Will you teach me?"

"Of course I will," she said brightly. "But you'll have to live it. And you'll have to do just as I tell you," holding up an admonitory finger.

"I'm yours to command, little woman," he returned in mock seriousness.

"Well," she began very softly, "you must first learn that love is just as much a principle as the Binomial Theorem in algebra. Do you know what that is? And you must apply it just as you would apply any principle, to everything. And, oh, it is important!"

"You sweet little thing," he murmured absently, gazing down into her glowing face. "Who taught you such stuff? Where did you learn it? I wonder—I wonder if you really are a daughter of the Incas."

She leaned back and laughed heartily. "Yes," she said, "I am a princess. Of course! Don't I look like one?"

"You look like—I wonder—pshaw!" he passed his hand across his eyes. "Yes, you certainly are a princess. And—do you know?—I wish I might be your prince."

"Oh, you couldn't! Padre José has that honor." But then her bright smile faded, and she looked off wistfully down the long corridor.

"Who is he?" demanded Ames savagely. "I'll send him a challenge to-night!"

"No," she murmured gently, "you can't. He's way down in Simití. And, oh, he was so good to me! He made me leave that country on account of the war."

The man started slightly. This innocent girl little knew that one of the instigators of that bloody revolution sat there beside her. Then a new thought flashed into his brain. "What is the full name of this priest?" he suddenly asked.

"José—José de Rincón," she whispered reverently.

José de Rincón—of Simití—whom Wenceslas had made the scapegoat of the revolution! Why, yes, that was the man! And who, according to a recent report from Wenceslas, had been arrested and—

"A—a—where did you say this—this José was, little girl?" he asked gently.

"In Simití," she replied. "He is working out his problem."

His eyes shifted quickly from hers. But he could not hold them away.

"His problem?"

"Yes. You know, he never was a priest at heart. But, though he saw the truth, in part, he was not able to prove it enough to set himself free; and so when I came away he stayed behind to work out his problem. And he will work it all out," she mused abstractedly, looking off into the distance; "he will work it all out and come—to me. I am—I am working with him, now—and for him. And—" her voice dropped to a whisper, "I love him, oh, so much!"

Ames's steely eyes narrowed. His mouth opened; then shut again with a sharp snap. That beautiful creature now belonged to him, and to none other! Were there other claimants, he would crush them without mercy! As for this apostate priest, José—humph! if he still lived he should rot the rest of his days in the reeking dungeons of San Fernando!

Carmen looked up. "When he comes to me," she said softly, "we are going to give ourselves to the whole world."

Ames appeared not to hear.

"And—perhaps—perhaps, by that time, you will be—be—"

"Well?" snapped the man, irritated by the return of her thought to himself.

"Different," finished the girl gently.

"Humph! Different, eh?"

"Yes. Perhaps by that time you will—you will love everybody," she murmured. "Perhaps you won't go on piling up big mountains of money that you can't use, and that you won't let anybody else use."

Ames frowned upon her. "Yes?" he said ironically.

"You will know then that Jesus founded his great empire on love. Your empire, you know, is human business. But you will find that such empires crumble and fall. And yours will, like all the rest."

"Say," he exclaimed, turning full upon her and seeming to bear her down by his tremendous personality, "you young and inexperienced reformers might learn a few things, too, if your prejudices could be surmounted. Has it ever occurred to you

that we men of business think not so much about accumulating money as about achieving success? Do you suppose you could understand that money-making is but a side issue with us?"

"Achieving success!" she echoed, looking wonderingly at him. "Well—are you—a success?"

He started to reply. Then he checked himself. A flush stole across his face. Then his eyes narrowed.

"Yes," the girl went on, as if in quiet soliloquy, "I suppose you are—a tremendous worldly success. And this Ball—it is a splendid success, too. Thousands of dollars will be raised for the poor. And then, next year, the same thing will have to be done again. Your charities cost you hundreds of millions every year up here. And, meantime, you rich men will go right on making more money at the expense of your fellow-men—and you will give a little of it to the poor when the next Charity Ball comes around. It's like a circle, isn't it?" she said, smiling queerly up at him. "It has no end, you know."

Ames had now decided to swallow his annoyance and meet the girl with the lance of frivolity. "Yes, I guess that's so," he began. "But of course you will admit that the world is slowly getting better, and that world-progress must of necessity be gradual. We can't reform all in a minute, can we?"

She shook her head. "I don't know how fast you might reform if you really, sincerely tried. But I think it would be very fast. And if you, a great, big, powerful man, with the most wonderful opportunities in the world, should really try to be a success, why—well, I'm sure you'd make very rapid progress, and help others like you by setting such a great example. For you are a wonderful man—you really are."

Ames looked at her long and quizzically. What did the girl mean? Then he took her hand, this time without resistance.

"Tell me, little girl—although I know there can be no doubt of it—are you a success?"

She raised her luminous eyes to his. "Yes," she replied simply.

He let fall her hand in astonishment. "Well!" he ejaculated, "would you mind telling me just why?"

She smiled up at him, and her sweet trustfulness drew his sagging heartstrings suddenly taut.

"Because," she said simply, "I strive every moment to 'acquire that mind which was in Christ Jesus.'"

Silence fell upon them. From amusement to wonder, to irritation, to anger, then to astonishment, and a final approximation to something akin to reverent awe had been the swift course of the man's emotions as he sat in this secluded nook

beside this strange girl. The poisoned arrows of his worldly thought had broken one by one against the shield of her protecting faith. His badinage had returned to confound himself. The desire to possess had utterly fled before the conviction that such thought was as wildly impossible as iniquitous.

Then he suddenly became conscious that the little body beside him had drawn closer—that it was pressing against him—that a little hand had stolen gently into his—and that a soft voice, soft as the summer winds that sigh among the roses, was floating to his ears.

"To be really great is to be like that wonderful man, Jesus. It is to know that through him the great Christ-principle worked and did those things which the world will not accept, because it thinks them miracles. It is to know that God is love, and to act that knowledge. It is to know that love is the Christ-principle, and that it will destroy every error, every discord, everything that is unlike itself. It is to yield your present false sense of happiness and good to the true sense of God as infinite good. It is to bring every thought into captivity to this Christ-principle, love. It is to stop looking at evil as a reality. It is to let go your hold on it, and let it fade away before the wonderful truth that God is everywhere, and that there isn't anything apart from Him. Won't you try it? You will have to, some day. I have tried it. I know it's true. I've proved it."

How long they sat in the quiet that followed, neither knew. Then the man suffered himself to be led silently back to the ball room again. And when he had recovered and restored his worldly self, the bright little image was no longer at his side.

* * * * * *

"Stand here, Jude, an' when they begins to come out to their gasoline carts grab anything ye can, an' git. I'll work over by the door."

The shivering woman crept closer to the curb, and the man slouched back against the wall close to the exit from which the revelers would soon emerge. A distant clock over a jeweler's window chimed the hour of four. A moment later the door opened, and a lackey came out and loudly called the number of the Hawley-Crowles car. That ecstatically happy woman, with Carmen and the obsequious young Duke of Altern, appeared behind him in the flood of light.

As the big car drew softly up, the wretched creature whom the man had called Jude darted from behind it and plunged full at Carmen. But the girl had seen her coming, and she met her with outstretched arm. The glare from the open door fell full upon them.

"Jude!"

"God!" cried the woman. "It's the little kid!"

She turned to flee. Carmen held her. With a quick movement the girl tore the string of pearls from her neck and thrust it into Jude's hand. The latter turned swiftly and darted into the blackness of the street. Then Carmen hurriedly entered the car, followed by her stupified companions. It had all been done in a moment of time.

"Good heavens!" cried Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, when she had recovered her composure sufficiently to speak. "What does this mean? What did you do?"

But Carmen replied not. And the Duke of Altern rubbed his weak eyes and tried hard to think.

CHAPTER 16

BEFORE Mrs. Hawley-Crowles sought her bed that morning the east was red with the winter sun. "The loss of the pearls is bad enough," she exclaimed in conclusion, glowering over the young girl who sat before her, "for I paid a good three thousand for the string! But, in addition, to scandalize me before the world—oh, how could you? And this unspeakable Jude—and that awful house—heavens, girl! Who would believe your story if it should get out?" The worried woman's face was bathed in cold perspiration.

"But—she saved me from—from that place," protested the harassed Carmen. "She was poor and cold—I could see that. Why should I have things that I don't need when others are starving?"

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles shook her weary head in despair. Her sister, Mrs. Reed, who had sat fixing the girl with her cold eyes throughout the stormy interview following their return from the ball, now offered a suggestion. "The thing to do is to telephone immediately to all the newspapers, and say that her beads were stolen last night."

"But they weren't stolen," asserted the girl. "I gave them to her—"

"Go to your room!" commanded Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, at the limit of her endurance. "And never, under any circumstances, speak of this affair to any one—never!"

The social crown, which had rested none too securely upon the gilded wig of the dynamic Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, had been given a jolt that set it tottering.

* * * * * *

It was very clear to Mrs. J. Wilton Ames after the Charity

Ball that she was engaged in a warfare to the death, and with the most relentless of enemies. Nothing short of the miraculous could now dethrone the detested Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her beautiful, mysterious ward. She dolefully acknowledged to herself and to the sulking Kathleen that she had been asleep, that she had let her foot slip, and that her own husband's conduct in leading the grand march with Carmen bade fair to give the *coup de grâce* to a social prestige which for many weeks had been decidedly on the wane.

"Mamma, we'll have to think up some new stunts," said the dejected Kathleen over the teacups the noon following the ball. "Why, they've even broken into the front page of the newspapers with a fake jewelry theft! Look, they pretend that the little minx was robbed of her string of pearls last night on leaving the hall. I call that pretty cheap notoriety!"

Mrs. Ames's lip curled in disdain as she read the news item. "An Inca princess, indeed! Nobody knows who she is, nor what! Why doesn't somebody take the trouble to investigate her? They'd probably find her an outcast."

"Couldn't papa look her up?" suggested Kathleen.

Mrs. Ames did not reply. She had no wish to discuss her husband, after the affair of the previous evening. And, even in disregard of that, she would not have gone to him with the matter. For she and her consort, though living under the same roof, nevertheless saw each other but seldom. At times they met in the household elevator; and for the sake of appearances they managed to dine together with Kathleen in a strained, unnatural way two or three times a week, at which times no mention was ever made of the son who had been driven from the parental roof. There were no exchanges of confidences or affection, and Mrs. Ames knew but little of the working of his mentality. She was wholly under the dominance of her masterful husband, merely an accessory to his mode of existence. He used her, as he did countless others, to buttress a certain side of his very complex life. As for assistance in determining Carmen's status, there was none to be obtained from him, strongly attracted by the young girl as he had already shown himself to be. Indeed, she might be grateful if the attachment did not lead to far unhappier consequences!

"Larry Beers said yesterday that he had something new," she replied irrelevantly to Kathleen's question. "He has in tow a Persian dervish, who sticks knives through his mouth, and drinks melted lead, and bites red-hot pokers, and a lot of such things. Larry says he's the most wonderful he's ever seen, and I'm going to have him and a real Hindu *swami* for next Wednesday evening."

New York's conspicuous set indeed would have languished often but for the social buffoonery of the clever Larry Beers, who devised new diversions and stimulating mental condiments for the jaded brains of that gilded cult. His table ballets, his bizarre parlor circuses, his cunningly devised fads in which he set forth his own inimitable antics, won him the motley and the cap and bells of this tinseled court, and forced him well out into the glare of publicity, which was what he so much desired.

And by that much it made him as dangerous as any stupid anarchist who toils by candle-light over his crude bombs. For by it he taught the great mass of citizenship who still retained their simple ideals of reason and respect that there existed a social caste, worshipers of the golden calf, to whom the simple, humdrum virtues were quite unendurable, and who, utterly devoid of conscience, would quaff champagne and dance on the raw, quivering hearts of their fellow-men with glee, if thereby their jaded appetites for novelty and entertainment might be for the moment appeased.

And so Larry Beers brought his *swami* and dervish to the Ames mansion, and caused his hostess to be well advertised in the newspapers the following day. And he caused the eyes of Carmen to bulge, and her thought to swell with wonder, as she gazed. And he caused the bepowdered nose of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to stand a bit closer to the perpendicular, while she sat devising schemes to cast a shade over this clumsy entertainment.

The chief result was that, a week later, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, still running true to form, retorted with a superb imitation of the French *Bal de l'Opéra*, once so notable under the Empire. The Beaubien had furnished the inspiring idea—and the hard cash.

"I wonder why I do it?" that woman had meditated. "Why do I continue to lend her money and take her notes? I wanted to ruin her, at first. I don't—I don't seem to feel that way now. Is it because of Carmen? Or is it because I hate that Ames woman so? I wonder if I do still hate her? At any rate I'm glad to see Carmen oust the proud hussy from her place. It's worth all I've spent, even if I burn the notes I hold against Jim Crowles's widow."

And often after that, when at night the Beaubien had sought her bed, she would lie for hours in the dim light meditating, wondering. "It's Carmen!" she would always conclude. "It's Carmen. She's making me over again. I'm not the same woman I was when she came into my life. Oh, God bless her—if there is a God!"

The mock *Bal de l'Opéra* was a magnificent *fête*. All the members of the smart set were present, and many appeared in costumes representing flowers, birds, and vegetables. Carmen went as a white rose; and her great natural beauty, set off by an exquisite costume, made her the fairest flower of the whole garden. The Duke of Altern, costumed as a long carrot, fawned in her wake throughout the evening. The tubbily girthy Gannette, dressed to represent a cabbage, opposed her every step as he bobbed before her, showering his viscous compliments upon the graceful creature. Kathleen Ames appeared as a bluebird; and she would have picked the fair white rose to pieces if she could, so wildly jealous did she become at the sight of Carmen's further triumph.

About midnight, when the revelry was at its height, a door at the end of the hall swung open, and a strong searchlight was turned full upon it. The orchestra burst into the wailing dead march from *Saul*, and out through the glare of light stalked the giant form of J. Wilton Ames, gowned in dead black to represent a King Vulture, and with a blood-red fez surmounting his cruel mask. As he stepped out upon the platform which had been constructed to represent the famous bridge in *"Sumurun,"* and strode toward the main floor, a murmur involuntarily rose from the assemblage. It was a murmur of awe, of horror, of fear. The *"monstrum horrendum"* of Poe was descending upon them in the garb which alone could fully typify the character of the man! When he reached the end of the bridge the huge creature stopped and distended his enormous sable wings.

"Good God!" cried Gannette, as he thought of his tremendous financial obligations to Ames.

Carmen shuddered and turned away from the awful spectacle. "I want to go," she said to the petrified Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, who had known nothing of this feature of the program.

Straight to the trembling, white-clad girl the great, black vulture stalked. The revelers fell away from him on either side as he approached. Carmen turned again and watched him come. Her face was ashen. "God is everywhere," she murmured.

Then her anxious look faded. A light came into her eyes, and a smile wreathed her mouth. And when Ames reached her and extended his huge, black wings again, she walked straight into them with a look of joy upon her beautiful face. Then the wings closed and completely hid the fair, white form from the gaping crowd.

For a few moments dead silence reigned throughout the

hall. Then the orchestra crashed, the vulture's wings slowly opened, and the girl, who would have gone to the stake with the same incomprehensible smile, stepped out. The black monster turned and strode silently, ominously, back to the end of the hall, crossed the bridge, and disappeared through the door which opened at his approach.

"I'm going home!" said the shaken Gannette to his perspiring wife. "That looks bad to me! That girl's done for; and Ames has taken this way to publicly announce the fact! My God!"

There was another astonished watcher in the audience that evening. It was the eminent Monsignor Lafelle, recently back from Europe by way of the West Indies. And after the episode just related, he approached Carmen and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles.

"A very clever, if startling, performance," he commented; "and with two superb actors, Mr. Ames and our little friend here," bowing over Carmen's hand.

"I am *so* glad you could accept our invitation, Monsignor. But, dear me! I haven't got my breath yet," panted the steaming Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. "Do take us, Monsignor, to the refectory. I feel faint."

A few moments later, over their iced drinks, Lafelle was relating vivid incidents of his recent travels, and odd bits of news from Cartagena. "No, Miss Carmen," he said, in reply to her anxious inquiries, "I did not meet the persons you have mentioned. And as for getting up the Magdalena river, it would have been quite impossible. Dismiss from your mind all thought of going down there now. Cartagena is tense with apprehension. The inland country is seething. And the little town of Simití which you mention, I doubt not it is quite shut off from the world by the war."

Carmen turned aside that he might not see the tears which welled into her eyes.

"Your entertainment, Madam," continued Lafelle, addressing the now recovered Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, "is superb, as have been all of your social projects this winter, I learn. The thought which you expressed to me some months ago regarding Catholic activity in social matters certainly was well founded. I perceive that our Protestant rivals have all but retired from the field."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles swelled with pride. Carmen regarded the churchman with wonder.

"And have you not found a sense of peace, of satisfaction and comfort, since you united with the true Church?" Lafelle went on. "Are you not at last at rest?"

"Quite so," sighed the lady, though the sigh was scarcely one of unalloyed relief.

Lafelle turned to Carmen. "And our little friend here—can she still remain an alien, now that she has some knowledge of her indebtedness to the Church?"

Carmen looked blank. "My indebtedness to the Church!" she repeated. "Why—"

It was now Lafelle's turn to sigh, as he directed himself again to Mrs. Hawley-Crowles. "She does not see, Madam, that it was by the ladder of Holy Church that she mounted to her present enviable social height."

"But—what—what do you mean?" stammered the bewildered girl.

"May I not come and explain it to her?" said Lafelle. Then he suddenly thought of his last conversation with the Beaubien. But he shrugged his shoulders, and a defiant look sat upon his features.

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles dared not refuse the request. She knew she was now too deeply enmeshed for resistance, and that Lafelle's control over her was complete—unless she dared to face social and financial ruin. And under that thought she paled and grew faint, for it raised the curtain upon chaos and black night.

"Would it be convenient for me to call to-morrow afternoon?" continued the churchman.

"Certainly," murmured Mrs. Hawley-Crowles in a scarcely audible voice.

"By the way," Lafelle said, suddenly turning the conversation, "how, may I ask, is our friend, Madam Beaubien?"

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles again trembled slightly. "I—I have not seen her much of late, Monsignor," she said feebly.

"A strong and very liberal-minded woman," returned Lafelle with emphasis. "I trust, as your spiritual adviser, Madam, I may express the hope that you are in no way influenced by her."

"Sir!" cried Carmen, who had bounded to her feet, her eyes ablaze, "Madam Beaubien is a noble woman!"

"My dear child!" Lafelle grasped her hand and drew her back into her chair. "You misunderstand me, quite. Madam Beaubien is a very dear friend of ours, and we greatly admire her strength of character. She certainly does not require your defense! Dear! dear! you quite startled me."

A few moments later he rose and offered his arms to his companions to lead them back to the hall. Delivering Carmen into the charge of the eagerly waiting Duke of Altern, Lafelle remarked, as he took leave of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, "I trust you will permit me to talk with your beautiful ward to-morrow afternoon—alone." And when the lady interpreted the signifi-

cance of his look, her heart beat rapidly, as she bowed her acknowledgment of abject submission.

"Bah Jove!" ejaculated the young Duke, clutching Carmen. "Ye know, I was deucedly afraid you had gone home, or that Uncle Wilton had you. Ye know, I think I'm jealous of him!"

Carmen laughed merrily at the fellow. His grotesque costume made him appear still more ridiculous.

"It's nothing to laugh at, Miss Carmen! It's a bally bore to have a regular mountain like him always getting in the way; and to-night I just made up my mind I wouldn't stand it any longer, bah Jove! I say, come on!"

He fixed his monocle savagely in his eye and strode rapidly toward the refreshment hall. Carmen went in silence. She heard his murmur of gratification when his gaze lighted upon the chairs and table which he had evidently arranged previously in anticipation of this *tête-à-tête*.

"Ye know," he finally began, after they were seated and he had sat some minutes staring at the girl, "ye know, you're deucedly clevah, Miss Carmen! I told mother so to-day, and this time she had to agree. And that about your being an Inca princess—ye know, I could see that from the very first day I met you. Mighty romantic, and all that, don't ye know!"

"Indeed, yes!" replied the girl, her thought drifting back to distant Simití.

"And all about that mine you own in South America—and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles making you her heiress—and all that—bah Jove! It's—it's romantic, I tell you!" His head continued to nod emphasis to his thought long after he finished speaking.

"Ye know," he finally resumed, drawing a gold-crested case from a pocket and lighting a monogrammed cigarette, "a fellow can always tell another who is—well, who belongs to the aristocracy. Mrs. Ames, ye know, said she had some suspicions about you. But I could see right off that it was because she was jealous. Mother and I knew what you were the minute we clapped eyes on you. That's because we belong to the nobility, ye know."

He smoked in silence for some moments. Carmen was far, far away.

"Bah Jove, Miss Carmen, I'm going to say it!" he suddenly blurted. "Mother wanted me to marry Lord Cragmont's filly; but, bah Jove, I say, I'm going to marry you!"

Carmen now heard, and she quickly sat up, her eyes wide and staring. "Marry me!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he went on. "Oh, it's all right. You're a princess, ye know, and so you're in our class. I'm not one of the kind that hands out a title to the red-nosed daughter of any American

pork packer just to get her money. Not me! The girl I marry has got to be my equal."

"Oh!" murmured the astonished Carmen.

"It's all right for you to have money, of course. I won't marry a pauper, even if she's a duchess. But you and I, Miss Carmen, are just suited to each other—wealth and nobility on each side. I've got thirty thousand good British acres in my own right, bah Jove!"

By now Carmen had fully recovered from her surprise. She reflected a moment, then determined to meet the absurd youth with the spirit of levity which his audacity merited. "But, Reginald," she said in mock seriousness, "though your father was a duke, how about your mother? Was she not just an ordinary American girl, a sister of plain Mrs. J. Wilton Ames? Where's the aristocracy there? Now on my side—"

"Now, Miss Carmen," cried the boy petulantly, "can't you see that, by marrying my father, my mother became ennobled? Bah Jove, you don't understand! Were your parents both noble?"

"Indeed they were!" said Carmen. "They were both children of a king."

"You don't say!" he whispered, leaning far over the table toward her. "Then we've simply *got* to marry!"

"But," protested the girl, "in my country people love those whom they marry. I haven't heard a word of that from you."

"Now, I say!" he exclaimed. "I was just getting round to that. It was love that made me offer you my name and title!"

"Yes? Love of what?"

"Why—you—of course!"

She laughed musically. "My dear Reginald, you don't love me. It is yourself that you love. You are madly in love, it is true; but it is with the young Duke of Altern."

"See here, you can't talk to me that way, ye know!" he flared out. "Bah Jove, I'm offering to make you a duchess—and I love you, too, though you may not think it!"

"Of course you love me, Reginald," said Carmen in gentle reply, now relinquishing her spirit of badinage; "and I love you. But I do not wish to marry you."

The young man started under the shock and stared at her in utter lack of comprehension. Was it possible that this unknown girl was refusing him, a duke? She must be mad!

"A—a—I don't get you, Miss Carmen," he stammered.

"Come," she said, rising and holding out a hand. "Let's not talk about this any more. We must go back to the hall. I do love you, Reginald, but not in the way that perhaps you would like. I love the real *you;* not the vain, foolish, self-

adoring human concept, called the Duke of Altern. And the love I feel for you will help you, oh, far more than if I married you! Come."

"But—Miss Carmen!" He stood before her with mouth open.

"Yes, Reginald."

"I—I expected we'd be engaged—I told mother—"

"Very well, Reginald, we are engaged. Engaged in handling this little problem that has presented itself to you. Do you see? And I will help you to solve it in the right way. For you need help. Reginald dear, I didn't mean to treat your proposal so lightly. I am sorry. There, give me your hand. We're just awfully good friends, aren't we? And I do love you, more than you think."

Leaving the bewildered youth in the hall, Carmen fell afoul of the very conservative Mrs. Gannette, whose husband, suffering from a sense of nausea since the appearance of Ames as a King Vulture, had some moments before summoned his car and driven to his favorite club to flood his apprehensions with Scotch high-balls.

"Ah, little sly-boots!" piped Mrs. Gannette, shaking a finger at Carmen. "I saw you with Reginald just now. I'm awfully wise about such things. Tell me, dear, when shall we be able to call you the Duchess of Altern? You lucky girl!"

Carmen's spirits sank, as, without reply, she submitted to the banal boredom of this blustering dame's society gabble. Mrs. Gannette hooked her arm into the girl's and led her to a divan. "It's a great affair, isn't it?" she panted, settling her round, unshapely form out over the seat. "Dear me! I did intend to come in costume. Was coming as a tomato. Ha! ha! Thought that was better adapted to my shape. But when I got the cloth form around me, do you know, I couldn't get through the door! And my unlovely pig of a husband said if I came looking like that he'd get a divorce." The corpulent dame shook and wheezed with the expression of her abundant merriment.

"Well," she continued, "it wasn't his threat that hindered me, goodness knows! A divorce would be a relief, after living forty years with him! Say, there goes young Doctor Worley. Speaking of divorce, he's just got one. It all came round through a joke. Billy Patterson dared him to exchange wives with him one evening when they were having a little too much gaiety at the Worley home, and the doctor took the dare. Ha! ha! The men swapped wives for two days. What do you think of that! And this divorce was the result. But Billy took his wife back. He thought it was just a good joke. Kate Worley

gets an alimony of fifty thousand per. But the doctor can stand it. Why, he has a practice of not less than two hundred and fifty thousand a year!"

"I supposed," murmured Carmen, "that amount of money is a measure of his ability, a proof of his great usefulness."

"Nothing of the kind," replied Mrs. Gannette. "He's simply in with the wealthy, that's all. Dear! dear! Do look at that fright over there! It's Lizzie Wall. Now isn't she simply hideous! Those diamonds are nothing but paste! The hussy!"

Carmen glanced at the pale, slender woman across the hall, seated alone, and wearing a look of utter weariness.

"I'd like to meet her," she said, suddenly drawn by the woman's mute appeal for sympathy.

"Don't do it!" hastily interposed Mrs. Gannette. "She's going to be dropped. Name's already on the black list. I don't know what Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was thinking of to invite her to-night! Her estate is being handled by Ames and Company, and J. Wilton says there won't be much left when it's settled—

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, abruptly flitting to another topic. "There goes Miss Tottle. Look at her skirt—flounced at the knees, and full in the back so's to give a bustle effect. My! I wish I could wear togs cut that way—

"They say, my dear," the garrulous old worldling prattled on, "that next season's styles will be very ultra. Butterfly idea, I hear. Hats small and round, like the heads of butterflies. Waists and jackets very full and quite loose in the back and shoulders, so's to give the appearance of wings. Belts, but no drawing in at the waist. Skirts plaited, plaits opening wide at the knees and coming close together again at the ankle, so's to look like the body of a butterfly. Then butterfly bows sprinkled all over."

She paused for breath. Then she drew a long sigh. "Oh dear," she lamented, "I'd give anything if I had a decent shape! I'd like to wear those shimmering, flowing, transparent summer things over silk tights. But, mercy me! I'd look like a potato busted wide open. Now you can wear those X-ray dresses all right—

"Say, Kathleen Ames has a new French gown to wear to the Dog Show. Skirt slit clear to the knee, with diamond garter around the leg just below. How I'd look! I have a leg like a ham!"

Carmen heard little of this vapid talk, as she sat studying the pale woman across the hall. She had resolved to meet her just as soon as the loquacious Mrs. Gannette should seek another victim. But that genial old gossip gave no present evidence of a desire to change.

"I'm *so* glad you're going to marry young Altern," she said, again swerving the course of her conversation. "He's got a fine old ruined castle somewhere in England, and seems to have wads of money, though I hear that everything is mortgaged to Ames. I wouldn't be surprised. Still, his bare title is worth something to an American girl. Besides, you've got money. And you'll do a lot for his family. You know—but don't breathe a word of this!—his mother never was recognized socially in England, and she finally had to give up the fight. For a while Ames backed her, but it wouldn't do. His millions couldn't buy her the court entrée, and she just had to quit. That's why she's over here now. The old Duke—he was lots older than she—died a couple of years ago. Ran through everything and drank himself to death. Before and since that happy event the Duchess did everything under the heavens to get a bid to court. She gave millions to charity and to entertainments. She sacrificed everything. But, no sir! It wouldn't do. She had no royal blood. But with you it will be different. You're a princess, royal Inca, and such like. You qualify right from the jump. So you see what you're expected to do for the Altern crowd—

"Dear! dear!" catching her breath and switching quickly to another theme, "have you heard about the Hairton scandal? It's simply rich! You see, young Sidney Ames—"

Carmen's patience had touched its limit. "Don't, please don't!" she begged, holding out a hand. "I do not wish to hear it!"

Mrs. Gannette raised her lorgnette and looked at the girl. "Why, my dear! what's the matter? The scandal's about Ames's son, you know. The reason he doesn't go in society. Just come to light. You see—"

"My dear Mrs. Gannette," Carmen looked up at her with a beseeching smile. "You wouldn't deliberately give me poison to drink, would you?"

"Why, certainly not!" blustered that garrulous lady in astonishment.

"Then why do you poison my mind with such conversation?"

"What!"

"You sit there pouring into my mentality thought after thought that is deadly poisonous, don't you know it?"

"Why—!"

"You don't mean to harm me, I know," pleaded the girl. "But if you only understood mental laws you would know that every thought entering one's mind tends to become manifested in some way. Thoughts of disease, disaster, death, scandal—

all tend to become externalized in discordant ways, either on the body, or in the environment. You don't want any such things manifested to me, do you? But you might just as well hand me poison to drink as to sit there and pour such deadly conversation into me."

Mrs. Gannette slowly drew herself up with the hauteur of a grandee. Carmen seized her hand. "I do not want to listen to these unreal things which concern only the human mind," she said earnestly. "Nor should you, if you are truly aristocratic, for aristocracy is of the thought. I am not going to marry Reginald. A human title means nothing to me. But one's thought—that alone is one's claim to *real* aristocracy. I know I have offended you, but only because I refuse to let you poison me. Now I will go."

She left the divan and the petrified dame, and hurriedly mingled with the crowd on the floor.

"The little cat!" exploded Mrs. Gannette, when she again found herself. "She has mortally insulted me!"

Carmen went directly to the pale woman, still sitting alone, who had been one of the objects of Mrs. Gannette's slighting remarks. The woman glanced up as she saw the girl approaching, and a look of wonder came into her eyes. Carmen held out a hand.

"I am Carmen Ariza," she said simply. "You are Miss Wall. I want you to be my friend."

The woman roused up and tried to appear composed.

"Will you ride with me to-morrow?" continued Carmen. "Then we can talk all we want to, with nobody to overhear. Aren't you happy?" she abruptly added, unable longer to withstand the appeal which issued mutely from the lusterless eyes before her.

The woman smiled wanly. "Not so very," she replied slowly.

"Well!" exclaimed Carmen; "what's wrong?"

"I am poverty-stricken," returned the woman sadly.

"But I will give you money," Carmen quickly replied.

"My dear child," said the woman, "I haven't anything but money. That is why I am poverty-stricken."

"Oh!" the girl exclaimed, sinking into a chair at her side. "Well," she added, brightening, "now you have me! And will you call me up, first thing in the morning, and arrange to ride with me? I want you to, so much!"

The woman's eyes grew moist. "Yes," she murmured, "I will—gladly."

In the small hours of the morning there were several heads tossing in stubborn wakefulness on their pillows in various New York mansions. But Carmen's was not one of them.

CHAPTER 17

ON the morning following Mrs. Hawley-Crowles's very successful imitation of the *Bal de l'Opéra,* Monsignor Lafelle paid an early call to the Ames *sanctum.* And the latter gentleman deemed the visit of sufficient importance to devote a full hour to his caller. When the churchman rose to take his leave he reiterated:

"Our friend Wenceslas will undertake the matter for you, Mr. Ames, but on the conditions which I have named. But Rome must be communicated with, and the substance of her replies must be sent from Cartagena to you, and your letters forwarded to her. That might take us into early summer. But there is no likelihood that Mr. Ketchim's engineers will make any further attempt before that time to enter Colombia. Mr. Reed in still in California. Mr. Harris is in Denver, at his old home, you tell me. So we need look for no immediate move from them."

"Quite satisfactory, Lafelle," returned Ames genially. "In future, if I can be of service to you, I am yours to command. Mr. Willett will hand you a check covering your traveling expenses on my behalf."

When the door closed after Lafelle, Ames leaned back in his chair and gave himself up to a moment's reflection. "I wonder," he mused, "I wonder if the fellow has something up his sleeve that he didn't show me? He acted suspiciously. Perhaps he's getting a bit dangerous. He may know too much already. I'm going to drop him after this trap is sprung. He's got Jim Crowles's widow all tied up, too. I wonder if he—by heaven! if he begins work on that girl I'll—"

He was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone bell. It was Gannette. "What?" shouted Ames, "you say the girl insulted your wife last evening? I don't believe she could—Yes, yes, I mean, I don't think she meant to—certainly not, no aspersion whatever intended—What? the girl will have to apologize?—Well! well—No, not in a thousand years!—Yes, I'll back her! And if your society isn't good enough for her—and I don't think it is—why, I'll form a little coterie all by myself!"

He hung up the receiver with a slam. Then he angrily summoned Hodson. "I want a dozen brokers watching Gannette now until I call them off," he commanded. "I want you to take personal charge of them. Dog his every move. I'll give you some suggestions later."

Hodson bowed and went out. Ames continued his meditations. "Lucile already has Gannette pretty well wound up in his Venezuelan speculations—and they are going to smash—Lafelle has fixed that. And I've bought her notes against Mrs. Hawley-Crowles for about a million—which I have reinvested for her in Colombia. Humph! She'll feed out of my hand now! La Libertad is mine when the trap falls. So is C. and R. And that little upstart, Ketchim, goes to Sing Sing!"

He turned to the morning paper that lay upon his desk. "I don't like the way the Colombian revolution drags," he mused. "But certainly it can't last much longer. And then—then—"

His thoughts wandered off into devious channels. "So José de Rincón is—well! well! Things have taken an odd turn. But—where on earth did that girl come from? Lord! she was beautiful last night. All religion, eh? Ha! ha! Well, she's young. There's a lot of experience coming to her. And then she'll drop a few of her pious notions. Lucile says—but Lucile is getting on my nerves!"

* * * * * *

Monsignor Lafelle found Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her ward awaiting him when his car drove up at two that afternoon. Carmen had not left the house during the morning, for Elizabeth Wall had telephoned early that a slight indisposition would necessitate postponement of the contemplated ride.

"Well," reflected Carmen, as she turned from the 'phone, "one who knows that God is everywhere can never be disappointed, for all good is ever present." And then she set about preparing for the expected call of Monsignor Lafelle.

When that dignitary entered the parlor Mrs. Hawley-Crowles graciously welcomed him, and then excused herself. "I will leave her with you, Monsignor," she said, indicating Carmen, and secretly glad to escape a presence which she greatly feared. Lafelle bowed, and then waved Carmen to a seat.

"I have come to-day, Miss Carmen," he began easily, "on a mission of vastest importance as concerning your welfare. I have been in Cartagena. I have talked with the acting-Bishop there, who, it seems, is not wholly unacquainted with you."

"Then," cried Carmen eagerly, "you know where Padre José is? And the others—"

"No," replied Lafelle. "I regret to say I know nothing of their present whereabouts. Leave them with God."

"I have long since done that," said Carmen softly.

"It is of yourself that I wish to speak," continued Lafelle. "I have come to offer you the consolation, the joy, and the pro-

tection of the Church. Your great benefactress, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, has found peace with us. Will you longer delay taking a step toward which you are by race, by national custom, and by your Saviour admonished? I have come to invite you to publicly confess your allegiance to the Church of Rome. You belong to us. A Catholic country gave you birth. Your parents were Catholic. Your best friend, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, is one of us. Come," he said, extending his hands. "We need you. And you, my daughter, now need the Church," he added with suggestive emphasis.

Carmen was not surprised. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had hinted the probable mission of the churchman, and the girl was prepared.

"I thank you, Monsignor," she replied simply. "But it is impossible."

"Impossible?" He arched his fine brows. "My child, it is quite necessary!"

"Why, Monsignor?"

"For your eternal salvation," he replied.

"But I have my salvation, ever present. It is the Christ-principle."

"My dear child, do not lean upon your pretty theories in the hope that they will open the door of heaven for you. There is no salvation outside of the Church."

"Monsignor," said Carmen gently, "such talk is very foolish. Can you prove to me that your Church ever sent any one to heaven? Have you any but a very mediaeval and material concept of heaven? To me, heaven is right here. It is the consciousness of good only, without a trace of materiality or evil. And I enter into that consciousness by means of the Christ-principle, which Jesus gave to the world. It is very simple, is it not? And it makes all your pomp and ceremony, and your penance and rites quite unnecessary."

Lafelle eyed her narrowly. He had certain suspicions, but he was not ready to voice them. Carmen went on:

"Monsignor, I love my fellow-men, oh, *so* much! I want to see every one work out his salvation, as Jesus bade us all do, and without any hindrance from others. And I ask but that same privilege from every one, yourself included. Let me work out my salvation as my Father has directed."

Lafelle smiled paternally. "I have no wish to hinder you, child. On the contrary, I offer you the assistance and infallible guidance of the Church. You are very young. We are very old. Beginning nineteen centuries ago, when we were divinely appointed custodian of the world's morals, our history has been a glorious one. We have in that time changed a pagan world into one that fears God and follows His Christ."

"But for nineteen hundred years, Monsignor, the various so-called Christian sects of the world have been persecuting and slaying one another over their foolish beliefs, basing their religious theories upon their interpretations of the Bible. Surely that is not a glorious history!"

"Ah! You unwittingly argue directly for our cause, my child. The result which you have just cited proves conclusively that the Scriptures can not be correctly interpreted by every one. That is perfectly patent to you, I see. Thus you acknowledge the necessity of an infallible guide. That is to be found only in the spiritual Fathers, and in the Pope, the holy Head of the Church of Rome, the present Vicegerent of Christ on earth."

"Then your interpretation of the Bible is the only correct one?"

"Absolutely!"

"And you Catholics are the only true followers of Christ? The only *real* Christians?"

"We are."

She rose. "Come, Monsignor, I will get my coat and hat. We will take your car."

"Why—where are you going?" he asked in amazement, as he slowly got to his feet.

She stopped and faced him squarely. "Jesus said: 'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.' I am going to take you over to the home of old Maggie, our cook's mother. She is sick. You will heal her, for you are a true follower of Christ."

"Well—but, hasn't she a doctor?"

"Yes, but he can't help her. Doctors are not infallible. But you represent the Christ on earth. You should be able to do the works which he did. You can change the wafer and wine into the flesh and blood of Jesus. How much easier, then, and vastly more practical, to cure a sick woman! Wait, I will be back in a minute."

"But, you impetuous child, I shall go on no such foolish errand as that!"

She stopped again. "If the woman were dying or dead, and you were summoned, you would go, would you not? For she is a Catholic."

"Why—yes, of course."

"And if she were dying you would put holy oil on her, and pray—but it wouldn't make her well. And if she were dead, you would say Masses for the repose of her soul. Monsignor, did it never occur to you that the great works which you claim to do are all done behind the veil of death? You can do but

little for mankind here; but you pretend to do much after they have passed beyond the grave. Is it quite fair to the poor and ignorant, I ask, to work that way? Did it never strike you as remarkable and very consistent that Jesus, whenever he launched a great truth, immediately ratified it by some great sign, some sign which the world now calls a miracle? The Gospels are full of such instances, where he first taught, then came down and immediately healed some one, thus at once putting his teaching to the proof. Do you prove anything? Your Church has taught and thundered and denounced for ages, but what has it proved? Jesus taught practical Christianity. You teach the so-called practical Christianity which makes a reality of evil and an eternal necessity of hospitals and orphan asylums. If you did his works the people would be so uplifted that these things would be wiped out. Your Church has had nineteen hundred years in which to learn to do the works which he did. Now come over to Maggie's with me and prove that you are a true follower and believer, and that the Church has given you the right sort of practical instruction!"

Gradually the girl's voice waxed stronger while she delivered this polemic. Slowly the churchman's face darkened, as he moved backward and sank into his chair.

"Now, Monsignor, having scolded you well," the girl continued, smiling as she sat down again, "I will apologize. But you needed the scolding—you know you did! And nearly all who profess the name of Christ need the same. Monsignor, I love you all, and every one, whether Catholic or Protestant, or whatever his creed. But that does not blind my eyes to your great need, and to your obstinate refusal to make any effort to meet that need."

A cynical look came into the man's face. "May I ask, Miss Carmen, if you consider yourself a true follower and believer?" he said coolly.

"Monsignor," she quickly replied, rising and facing him, "you hope by that adroit question to confound me. You mean, do I heal the sick? Listen: when I was a child my purity of thought was such that I knew no evil. I could not see it anywhere. I could not see sickness or death as anything more than unreal shadows. And that wonderful clearness of vision and purity of thought made me a channel for the operation of the Christ-principle, God himself. And thereby the sick were healed in my little home town. Then, little by little, after my beloved teacher, José, came to me, I lost ground in my struggle to keep the vision clear. They did not mean to, but he and my dearest padre Rosendo and others held their beliefs of evil as

a reality so constantly before me that the vision became obscured, and the spirituality alloyed. The unreal forces of evil seemed to concentrate upon me. I know why now, for the greatest good always stirs up the greatest amount of evil—the highest truth always has the lowest lie as its opposite and opponent. I see now, as never before, the unreality of evil. I see now, as never before, the marvelous truth which Jesus tried, oh, *so* hard, to impress upon the dull minds of his people, the truth which you refuse to see. And ceaselessly I am now striving to acquire 'that mind,' that spiritual consciousness, which was in him. My vision is becoming daily clearer. I have been wonderfully shielded, led, and cared for. And I shall heal, some day, as he did. I shall regain my former spirituality, for it has never really been lost. But, Monsignor, do not ask me to come into your Church and allow my brightening vision to become blurred by your very inadequate concept of God—a God who is moved by the petitions of Saints and Virgin and mortal men. No! no! Unless," she added, brightening, "you will let me teach your Church what I know. Will you agree to that?"

Lafelle did not answer. Then Carmen shook her head. "You see," she said, "your Church requires absolute submission to its age-worn authority. According to you, I have nothing to give. Very well, if your Church can receive nothing from me, and yet can give me nothing more than its impossible beliefs, undemonstrable this side of the grave, at least—then we must consider that a gulf is fixed between us.

"Oh, Monsignor," she pleaded, after a moment's silence, "you see, do you not? When Jesus said that he gave his disciples power over all evil, did he not mean likewise over all physical action, and over every physical condition? But did he mean that they alone should have such power? What a limiting of infinite Love! No, he meant that every one who followed him and strove ceaselessly for spirituality of thought should acquire that spirituality, and thereby cleanse himself of false beliefs, and make room for the Christ-principle to operate, even to the healing of the sick, to the raising of those mesmerized by the belief of death as a power and reality, and to the dematerializing of the whole material concept of the heavens and earth. Can't you, a churchman, see it? And can't you see how shallow your views are? Don't you know that even the physical body is but a part of the human, material concept, and therefore a part of the 'one lie' about God, who is Spirit?"

Lafelle had listened patiently. But now his time had come to speak in rebuttal. And yet, he would make no attempt to assail her convictions. He knew well that she would not yield—at least, to-day. He therefore played another card.

"Miss Carmen," he said gently, "the Church is ever doing beneficent deeds which do not come to light, and for which she receives no praise from men. Your own and Mrs. Hawley-Crowles's elevation to social leadership came through her. There is also a rumor that the Church afforded you an asylum on your first night in this city, when, if ever, you needed aid. The Church shielded and cared for you even in Simití. Indeed, what has she not done for you? And do you now, alas! turn and rend her?"

"Monsignor," replied Carmen, "I am not unmindful of the care always bestowed upon me. And I am not ungrateful. But my gratitude is to my God, who has worked through many channels to bless me. My account is with Him. Leave it there, and fear not that I shall prove ungrateful to Him, to whom my every thought is consecrated."

Lafelle bit his lip. Then he spoke low and earnestly, while he held his gaze fixed upon the girl's bright eyes. "Miss Carmen, if you knew that the Church now afforded you the only refuge from the dangers that threaten, you would turn to her as a frightened child to its mother."

"I fear nothing, Monsignor," replied the girl, her face alight with a smile of complete confidence. "I am not the kind who may be driven by fear into acceptance of undemonstrable, unfounded theological beliefs. Fear has always been a terrible weapon in the hands of those who have sought to force their opinions upon their fellow-men. But it is powerless to influence me. Fear, Monsignor, is sin. It causes men to miss the mark. And it is time-honored. Indeed, according to the Bible allegory, it began in the very garden of Eden, when poor, deceived Adam confessed to God that he was afraid. If God was infinite then, as you admit you believe Him to be now, who or what made Adam afraid? Whence came the imaginary power of fear? For, 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' God is love. And there is no fear in love."

"But, surely, Miss Carmen, you will not stubbornly close your eyes to threatening evil?"

"Monsignor, I close my eyes to all that is unlike God. He is everything to me. I know nothing but Him and His perfect manifestation."

Lafelle sat some moments in silence. The picture which he and the young girl formed was one of rare beauty and interest: he, weighted with years, white of hair, but rugged of form, with strikingly handsome features and kindly eyes—she, a child, delicate, almost wraith-like, glowing with a beauty that was not of earth, and, though untutored in the wiles of

men, still holding at bay the sagacious representative of a crushing weight of authority which reached far back through the centuries, even to the Greek and Latin Fathers who put their still unbroken seal upon the strange elaborations which they wove out of the simple words of the Nazarene.

When the churchman again looked up and felt himself engulfed in the boundless love which emanated from that radiant, smiling girl, there surged up within him a mighty impulse to go to her, to clasp her in his arms, to fall at her feet and pray for even a mite of her own rare spirituality. The purpose which he had that morning formulated died within him; the final card which he would have thrown lay crushed in his hand. He rose and came and stood before her.

"The people believe you a child of the ancient Incas," he said slowly, taking her hand. "What if I should say that I know better?"

"I would say that you were right, Monsignor," she replied gently, looking up into his face with a sweet smile.

"Then you admit the identity of your father?"

"Yes, Monsignor."

"Ah! And that is—?"

"God."

The man bent for a moment over the little white hand, and then immediately left the house.

CHAPTER 18

MONSIGNOR LAFELLE in his interview with Carmen had thrown out a hint of certain rumors regarding her; but the days passed, and the girl awoke not to their significance. Then, one morning, her attention was attracted by a newspaper report of the farewell address of a young priest about to leave his flock. When she opened the paper and caught sight of the news item she gave a little cry, and immediately forgot all else in her absorption in the closing words:

"—and I have known no other ambition since the day that little waif from a distant land strayed into my life, lighting the dead lamp of my faith with the torch of her own flaming spirituality. She said she had a message for the people up here. Would to God she might know that her message had borne fruit!"

The newspaper slipped from the girl's hands to the floor. Her eyes, big and shining, stared straight before her. "And I will lead the blind by a way that they know not—" she murmured.

The telephone rang. It was Miss Wall, ready now for the postponed ride. Carmen clapped her hands and sang for joy as she summoned the car and made her preparations. "We'll go over to his church," she said aloud. "We'll find him!" She hurried back to the newspaper to get the address of the church from which he had spoken the preceding day. "They will know where he is," she said happily. "Oh, isn't it just wonderful!"

A few minutes later, with Miss Wall at her side, she was speeding to the distant suburb where the little church was located.

"We are going to find a priest," she said simply. "Oh, you mustn't ask me any questions! Mrs. Hawley-Crowles doesn't like to have me talk about certain things, and so I can't tell you."

Miss Wall glanced at her in wonder. But the happy, smiling countenance disarmed suspicion.

"Now tell me," Carmen went on, "tell me about yourself. I'm a missionary, you know," she added, thinking of Father Waite.

"A missionary! Well, are you trying to convert the society world?"

"Yes, by Christianity—not by what the missionaries are now teaching in the name of Christianity. I'll tell you all about it some day. Now tell me, why are you unhappy? Why is your life pitched in such a minor key? Perhaps, together, we can change it to a major."

Miss Wall could not help joining in the merry laugh. Then her face grew serious. "I am unhappy," she said, "because I have arrived nowhere."

Carmen looked at her inquiringly. "Well," she said, "that shows you are on the wrong track, doesn't it?"

"I'm tired of life—tired of everything, everybody!" Miss Wall sank back into the cushions with her lips pursed and her brow wrinkled.

"No, you are not tired of life," said Carmen quietly; "for you do not know what life is."

"No, I suppose not," replied the weary woman. "Do you?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, it is God."

"Oh, don't mention that name, nor quote Scripture to me!" cried the woman, throwing up her hands in exasperation. "I've had that stuff preached at me until it turned my stomach! I hope you are not an emotional, weepy religionist. Let's not talk about that subject. I'm heartily sick of it!"

"All right," replied Carmen cheerily. "Padre José used to say—"

"Who's he?" demanded Miss Wall, somewhat curtly.

"Oh, he is a priest—"

"A priest! Dear me! do you constantly associate with priests, and talk religion?"

The young girl laughed. "Well," she responded, "I've had a good deal to do with both."

"And are you any better for it?"

"Oh, yes—lots!" she said quickly.

The woman regarded her with curiosity. "Tell me something about your life," she said. "They say you are a princess."

"Surely I am a princess," returned Carmen, laughing merrily. "Listen; I will tell you about big, glorious Simití, and the wonderful castle I lived in there, and about my Prime Minister, Don Rosendo, and—well, listen, and then judge for yourself if I am not of royal extraction!"

Laughing again up into the mystified face of Miss Wall, the enthusiastic girl began to tell about her former life in far-off Guamocó.

As she listened, the woman's eyes grew wide with interest. At times she voiced her astonishment in sudden exclamations. And when the girl concluded her brief recital, she bent upon the sparkling face a look of mingled wonder and admiration. "Goodness! After going through all that, how can you be so happy now? And with all your kin down there in that awful war! Why—!"

"Don't you think I am a princess now?" Carmen asked, smiling up at her.

"I think you are a marvel!" was the emphatic answer.

"And—you don't want to know what it was that kept me through it all, and that is still guiding me?" The bright, animated face looked so eagerly, so lovingly, into the world-scarred features of her companion.

"Not if you are going to talk religion. Tell me, who is this priest you are seeking to-day, and why have you come to see him?"

"Father Waite. He is the one who found me—when I got lost—and took me to my friends."

The big car whirled around a corner and stopped before a dingy little church edifice surmounted by a weather-beaten cross. On the steps of a modest frame house adjoining stood a man. He turned as the car came up.

"Father Waite!" Carmen threw wide the door of the car and sprang out. "Father Waite!" clasping his hands. "Don't you know me? I'm Carmen!"

A light came into the startled man's eyes. He recognized

her. Then he stepped back, that he might better see her. More than a year had passed since he had taken her, so oddly garbed, and clinging tightly to his hand, into the Ketchim office. And in that time, he thought, she had been transformed into a vision of heavenly beauty.

"Well!" cried the impatient girl. "Aren't you going to speak?" And with that she threw her arms about him and kissed him loudly on both cheeks.

The man and Miss Wall gave vent to exclamations of astonishment. He colored violently; Miss Wall sat with mouth agape.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" pursued the girl, again grasping his hands.

Then he found his tongue. "An angel from heaven could not be more welcome," he said. But his voice was low, and the note of sadness was prominent.

"Well, I am an angel from heaven," said the laughing, artless girl. "And I'm an Inca princess. And I'm just plain Carmen Ariza. But, whoever I am, I am, oh, *so* glad to see you again! I—" she looked about carefully—"I read your sermon in the newspaper this morning. Did you mean me?" she concluded abruptly.

He smiled wanly. "Yes, I meant you," he softly answered.

"Come with me now," said the eager girl. "I want to talk with you."

"Impossible," he replied, shaking his head.

"Then, will you come and see me?" She thought for a moment. "Why have you never been to see me? Didn't you know I was still in the city?"

"Oh, yes," he replied. "I used to see your name in the papers, often. And I have followed your career with great interest. But—you moved in a circle—from which I—well, it was hardly possible for me to come to see you, you know—"

"It was!" exclaimed the girl. "But, never mind, you are coming now. Here," drawing a card from her bag, "this is the address of Madam Beaubien. Will you come there to-morrow afternoon, at two, and talk with me?"

He looked at the card which she thrust into his hand, and then at the richly-gowned girl before him. He seemed to be in a dream. But he nodded his head slowly.

"Tell me," she whispered, "how is Sister Katie?"

Ah, if the girl could have known how that great-hearted old soul had mourned her "little bairn" these many months.

"I will go to see her," said Carmen. "But first you will come to me to-morrow." She beamed upon him as she clasped his hands again. Then she entered the car, and sat waving her hand back at him as long as he could see her.

It would be difficult to say which of the two, Miss Wall or Father Waite, was the more startled by this abrupt and lively *rencontre*. But to Carmen, as she sat back in the car absorbed in thought, it had been a perfectly natural meeting between two warm friends. Suddenly the girl turned to the woman. "You haven't anything but money, and fine clothes, and automobiles, and jewels, you think. And you want something better. Do you know? I know what it is you want."

"What is it?" asked the wondering woman, marveling at this strange girl who went about embracing people so promiscuously.

"Love."

The woman's lip trembled slightly when she heard this, but she did not reply.

"And I'm going to love you," the girl continued. "Oh, *so* much! You're tired of society gabble and gossip; you're tired of spending on yourself the money you never earned; you're not a bit of use to anybody, are you? But you want to be. You're a sort of tragedy, aren't you? Oh, I know. There are just lots of them in high society, just as weary as you. They haven't anything but money. And they lack the very greatest thing in all of life, the very thing that no amount of money will buy, just love! But, do you know? they don't realize that, in order to get, they must give. In order to be loved, they must themselves love. Now you start right in and love the whole world, love everybody, big and little. And, as you love people, try to see only their perfection. Never look at a bad trait, nor a blemish of any sort. Try it. In a week's time you will be a new woman."

"Do you do that?" the woman asked in a low tone.

"I have *always* done it," replied Carmen. "I don't know anything but love. I never knew what it was to hate or revile. I never could see what there was that deserved hatred or loathing. I don't see anything but good—everywhere."

The woman slipped an arm about the girl. "I—I don't mind your talking that way to me," she whispered. "But I just couldn't bear to listen to any more religion."

"Why!" exclaimed Carmen. "That's all there is to religion! Love is the tie that binds all together and all to God. Why, Miss Wall—"

"Call me Elizabeth, please," interrupted the woman.

"Well then, Elizabeth," she said softly, "all creeds have got to merge into just one, some day, and, instead of saying 'I believe,' everybody will say 'I understand and I love.' Why, the very person who loved more than anybody else ever did was the one who saw God most clearly! He knew that if we

would see God—good everywhere—we would just simply *have* to love, for God *is* love! Don't you see? It is so simple!"

"Do you love me, Carmen, because you pity me?"

"No, indeed!" was the emphatic answer. "God's children are not to be pitied—and I see in people only His children."

"Well, why, then, do you love me?"

The girl replied quickly: "God is love. I am His reflection. I reflect Him to you. That's loving you.

"And now," she continued cheerily, "we are going to work together, aren't we? You are first going to love everybody. And then you are going to see just what is right for you to do—what work you are to take up—what interests you are to have. But love comes first."

"Tell me, Carmen, why are you in society? What keeps you there, in an atmosphere so unsuited to your spiritual life?"

"God."

"Oh, yes," impatiently. "But—"

"Well, Elizabeth dear, every step I take is ordained by Him, who is my life. I am where He places me. I leave everything to Him, and then keep myself out of the way. If He wishes to use me elsewhere, He will remove me from society. But I wait for Him."

The woman looked at her and marveled. How could this girl, who, in her few brief years, had passed through fire and flood, still love the hand that guided her!

CHAPTER 19

TO the great horde of starving European nobility the daughters of American millionaires have dropped as heavenly manna. It was but dire necessity that forced low the bars of social caste to the transoceanic traffic between fortune and title.

That Mrs. Hawley-Crowles might ever aspire to the purchase of a decrepit dukedom had never entered her thought. A tottering earldom was likewise beyond her purchasing power. She had contented herself that Carmen should some day barter her rare culture, her charm, and her unrivaled beauty, for the more lowly title of an impecunious count or baron. But to what heights of ecstasy did her little soul rise when the young Duke of Altern made it known to her that he would honor her beautiful ward with his own glorious name—in exchange for La Libertad and other good and valuable considerations, receipt of which would be duly acknowledged.

"I—aw—have spoken to her, ye know, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles," that worthy young cad announced one afternoon, as he sat alone with the successful society leader in the warm glow of her living room. "And—bah Jove! she said we were engaged, ye know—really! Said we were awfully good friends, ye know, and all that. 'Pon my word! she said she loved me." For Reginald had done much thinking of late—and his creditors were restless.

"Why, you don't mean it!" cried the overpowered Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, beaming like a full-blown sunflower.

"But I do, really! Only—ye know, she'll have to be—coached a bit, ye know—told who we are—our ancestral history, and all that. You know what I mean, eh?"

"Of course—you dear boy! Why, she just couldn't help loving you!"

"No—aw—no, of course—that is—aw—she has excellent prospects—financial, I mean, eh? Mines, and all that, ye know—eh?"

"Why, she owns the grandest gold mine in all South America! Think of it!"

"Bah Jove! I—aw—I never was so attracted to a girl in all me blooming life! You will—a—speak to her, eh? Help me out, ye know. Just a few words, eh? You know what I mean?"

"Never fear, Reginald, she's yours. There will be no opposition."

"Opposition! Certainly not—not when she knows about our family. And—aw—mother will talk with you—that is, about the details. She'll arrange them, ye know. I never was good at business."

And the haughty mother of the young Duke did call shortly thereafter to consult in regard to her son's matrimonial desires. The nerve-racking round of balls, receptions, and other society functions was quite forgotten by the elated Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, whose ears tingled deliciously under the pompous boastings of the Dowager Lady Altern. The house of Altern? Why, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was convinced, after a half hour's conversation with this proud mother, that the royal house of Brunswick was but an impudent counterfeit! What was La Libertad worth? She knew not. But her sister's brother, Mr. Reed, who had hastily appraised it, had said that there was a mountain of gold there, only awaiting Yankee enterprise. And Carmen? There was proof positive that she was an Inca princess. Yes, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was *so* honored by the deep interest which the young Duke manifested in the wonderful girl! And she would undertake negotiations with

her at once. But it must be done wisely. Carmen was not like other girls. No, indeed!

And now Mrs. Hawley-Crowles had to plan very carefully. She was terribly in debt; yet she had resources. The Beaubien was inexhaustible. Ames, too, might be depended upon. And La Libertad—well, there was Mr. Philip O. Ketchim to reckon with. So she forthwith summoned him to a consultation.

But, ere her talk with that prince of finance, another bit of good fortune fell into the lady's spacious lap. Reed had written that he was doing poorly with his western mining ventures, and would have to raise money at once. He therefore offered to sell his interest in the Simití Company. Moreover, he wanted his wife to come to him and make her home in California, where he doubtless would spend some years. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles offered him twenty-five thousand dollars for his Simití interest; of which offer Reed wired his immediate acceptance. Then the lady packed her rueful sister Westward Ho! and laid her newly acquired stock before the Beaubien for a large loan. That was but a day before Ketchim called.

"Madam," said that suave gentleman, smiling piously, "you are a genius. Our ability to announce the Duke of Altern as our largest stockholder will result in a boom in the sales of Simití stock. The Lord has greatly prospered our humble endeavors. Er—might I ask, Madam, if you would condescend to meet my wife some afternoon? We are rapidly acquiring some standing in a financial way, and Mrs. Ketchim would like to know you and some of the more desirable members of your set, if it might be arranged."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles beamed her joy. She drew herself up with a regnant air. The people were coming to her, their social queen, for recognition!

"And there's my Uncle Ted, you know, Madam. He's president of the C. and R."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles nodded and looked wise. "Possibly we can arrange it," she said. "But now about our other investments. What is Joplin Zinc doing?"

"Progressing splendidly, Madam. We shall declare a dividend this month."

The lady wondered, for Joplin Zinc was not yet in operation, according to the latest report.

* * * * * *

Meantime, while Mrs. Hawley-Crowles was still laying her plans to herd the young girl into the mortgaged dukedom of Altern, Father Waite kept his appointment, and called at the Beaubien mansion on the afternoon Carmen had set. He was

warmly received by the girl herself, who had been watching for his coming.

"Now," she began like a bubbling fountain, when they were seated in the music room, "where's Jude? I want to find her."

"Jude? Why, I haven't the slightest idea to whom you refer," returned the puzzled man.

"The woman who took me to the Sister Superior," explained Carmen.

"Ah! We never saw her again."

"Well," said the girl confidently, "I saw her, but she got away from me. But I shall find her—it is right that I should. Now tell me, what are you going to do?"

"I have no idea. Earn my living some way," he replied meditatively.

"You have lots of friends who will help you?"

"None," he said sadly. "I am an apostate, you know."

"Well, that means that you're free. The chains have dropped, haven't they?"

"But left me dazed and confused."

"You are not dazed, nor confused! Why, you're like a prisoner coming out of his dungeon into the bright sunlight. You're only blinking, that's all. And, as for confusion—well, if I would admit it to be true I could point to a terrible state of it! Just think, a duke wants to marry me; Mrs. Hawley-Crowles is determined that he shall; I am an Inca princess, and yet I don't know who I am; my own people apparently are swallowed up by the war in Colombia; and I am in an environment here in New York in which I have to fight every moment to keep myself from flying all to pieces! But I guess God intends to keep me here for the present. Oh, yes, and Monsignor Lafelle insists that I am a Catholic and that I must join his Church."

"Monsignor Lafelle! You—you know him?"

"Oh, yes, very well. And you?"

He evaded reply by another query. "Is Monsignor Lafelle working with Madam Beaubien, your friend?"

"I think not," laughed Carmen. "But Mrs. Hawley-Crowles—"

"Was it through him that she became a communicant?"

"Yes. Why?"

"And is he also working with Mr. J. Wilton Ames? He converted Mrs. Ames's sister, the Dowager Duchess, in England. The young Duke is also going to join the faith, I learn. But—you?" He stopped suddenly and looked searchingly at her.

At that moment a maid entered, bearing a card. Close on her heels followed the subject of their conversation, Monsignor himself.

As he entered, Carmen rose hastily to greet him. Lafelle bent over her hand. Then, as he straightened up, his glance fell upon Father Waite. The latter bowed without speaking. For a moment the two men stood eying each other sharply. Then Lafelle looked from Father Waite to Carmen quizzically. "I beg your pardon," he said, "I was not aware that you had a caller. Madam Beaubien, is she at home?"

"No," said Carmen simply. "She went out for a ride."

"Ah!" murmured Lafelle, looking significantly from the girl to Father Waite, while a smile curled his lips. "I see. I will intrude no further." He bowed again, and turned toward the exit.

"Wait!" rang forth Carmen's clear voice. She had caught the churchman's insinuating glance and instantly read its meaning. "Monsignor Lafelle, you will remain!"

The churchman's brows arched with surprise, but he came back and stood by the chair which she indicated.

"And first," went on the girl, standing before him like an incarnate Nemesis, her face flushed and her eyes snapping, "you will hear from me a quotation from the Scripture, on which you assume to be authority: 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so *is* he!' "

For a moment Lafelle flushed. Then his face darkened. Finally a bland smile spread over his features, and he sat down. The girl resumed her seat.

"Now, Monsignor Lafelle," she continued severely, "you have urged me to unite with your Church. When you asked me to subscribe to your beliefs I looked first at them, and then at you, their product. You have come here this afternoon to plead with me again. The thoughts which you accepted when you saw Father Waite here alone with me, are they a reflection of love, which thinketh no evil? Or do they reflect the intolerance, the bigotry, the hatred of the carnal mind? You told me that your Church would not let me teach it. Think you I will let it or you teach me?"

Father Waite sat amazed at the girl's stinging rebuke. When she concluded he rose to go.

"No!" said Carmen. "You, too, shall remain. You have left the Church of which Monsignor Lafelle is a part. Either you have done that Church, and him, a great injustice—or he does ignorant or wilful wrong in insisting that I unite with it."

"My dear child," said Lafelle gently, now recovered and wholly on his guard, "your impetuosity gets the better of your judgment. This is no occasion for a theological discussion, nor are you sufficiently informed to bear a part in such. As for myself, you unintentionally do me great wrong. As I have

repeatedly told you, I seek only your eternal welfare. Else would I not labor with you as I do."

Carmen turned to Father Waite. "Is my eternal welfare dependent upon acceptance of the Church's doctrines?"

"No," he said, in a scarcely audible voice.

A cynical look came into Lafelle's eyes. But he replied affably: "When preachers fall out, the devil falls in. Your reply, Mr. Waite, comes quite consistently from one who has impudently tossed aside authority."

"My authority, Monsignor," returned the ex-priest in a low tone, "is Jesus Christ, who said: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"Ah!" murmured Lafelle; "then it was love that prompted you to abandon your little flock?"

"I left my pulpit, Monsignor, because I had nothing to give my people. I no longer believe the dogmas of the Church. And I refused longer to take the poor people's money to support an institution so politically religious as I believe your Church to be. I could no longer take their money to purchase the release of their loved ones from an imagined purgatory—a place for which there is not the slightest Scriptural warrant—"

"You mistake, sir!" interrupted Lafelle in an angry tone.

"Very well, Monsignor," replied Father Waite; "grant, then, that there is such Scriptural warrant; I would nevertheless know that the existence of purgatory was wholly incompatible with the reign of an infinite God of love. And, knowing that, I have ceased to extort gifts of money from the ignorance of the living and the ghastly terrors of the dying—"

"And so deceive yourself that you are doing a righteous act in removing their greatest consolation," the churchman again interrupted, a sneer curving his lip.

"Consolation! The consolation which the stupifying drug affords, yes! Ah, Monsignor, as I looked down into the faces of my poor people, week after week, I knew that no sacerdotal intervention was needed to remit their sins, for their sins were but their unsolved problems of life. Oh, the poor, grief-stricken mothers who bent their tear-stained eyes upon me as I preached the 'authority' of the Fathers! Well I knew that, when I told them from my pulpit that their deceased infants, if baptized, went straight to heaven, they blindly, madly accepted my words! And when I went further and told them that their dead babes had joined the ranks of the blessed, and could thenceforth be prayed to, could I wonder that they rejoiced and eagerly grasped the false message of cheer? They believed because they wanted it to be so. And yet those utterances of mine,

based upon the accepted doctrine of Holy Church, were but narcotics, lulling those poor, afflicted minds into a false sense of rest and security, and checking all further human progress."

Lafelle shrugged his shoulders. "It is to be regretted," he said coldly, "that such narrowness of view should be permitted to impede the salvation of souls."

"Salvation—of—souls!" exclaimed Father Waite. "Ah, how many souls have I not saved!—and yet I know not whether they or I be really saved! Saved? From what? From death? Certainly not! From misery, disease, suffering in this life? No, alas, no! Saved, then, from what? Ah, my friend, saved only from the torments of a hell and a purgatory constructed in the fertile minds of busy theologians!"

Lafelle turned to Carmen. "Some other day, perhaps—when it may be more convenient for us both—and you are alone—"

Carmen laughed. "Don't quit the field, Monsignor—unless you surrender abjectly. You started this controversy, remember. And you were quite indiscreet, if you will recall."

Monsignor bowed, smiling. "You write my faults in brass," he gently lamented. "When you publish my virtues, if you find that I am possessed of any, I fear you will write them in water."

Carmen laughed again. "Your virtues should advertise themselves, Monsignor."

"Ah, then do you not see in me the virtue of desiring your welfare above all else, my child?"

"And the welfare of this great country, which you have come here to assist in making dominantly Catholic, is it not so, Monsignor?"

Lafelle started slightly. Then he smiled genially back at the girl. "It is an ambition which I am not ashamed to own," he returned gently.

"But, Monsignor," Carmen continued earnestly, "are you not aware of the inevitable failure of your mission? Do you not know that mediaeval theology comports not with modern progress?"

"True, my child," replied the churchman. "And more, that our so-called modern progress—modernism, free-thinking, liberty of conscience, and the consequent terrible extravagance of beliefs and false creeds—constitutes the greatest menace now confronting this fair land. Its end is inevitable anarchy and chaos. Perhaps you can see that."

"Monsignor," said Carmen, "in the Middle Ages the Church was supreme. Emperors and kings bowed in submission before her. The world was dominantly Catholic. Would you be

willing, for the sake of Church supremacy to-day, to return to the state of society and civilization then obtaining?"

"That would not follow."

"No? I point you to Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, South America, all Catholic now or formerly, and I ask if you attribute not their oppression, their ignorance, their low morals and stunted manhood, to the dominance of churchly doctrines, which oppose freedom of conscience and press and speech, and make learning the privilege of the clergy and the rich?"

"It is an old argument, child," deprecated Lafelle. "May I not point to France, on the contrary?"

"She has all but driven the Church from her borders."

"But is still Catholic!" he retorted. "And England, though Anglican, calls herself Catholic. She will return to the true fold. Germany is forsaking Luther, as she sees the old light shining still undimmed."

Carmen looked at Father Waite. The latter read in her glance an invitation further to voice his own convictions.

"Monsignor doubtless misreads the signs of the times," he said slowly. "The hour has struck for the ancient and materialistic theories enunciated with such assumption of authority by ignorant, often blindly bigoted theologians, to be laid aside. The religion of our fathers, which is our present-day evangelical theology, was derived from the traditions of the early churchmen. They put their seal upon it; and we blindly accept it as authority, despite the glaring, irrefutable fact that it is utterly undemonstrable. Why do the people continue to be deceived by it? Alas! only because of its mesmeric promise of immortality beyond the grave."

Monsignor bowed stiffly in the direction of Father Waite. "Fortunately, your willingness to plunge the Christian world into chaos will fail of concrete results," he said coldly.

"I but voice the sentiments of millions, Monsignor. For them, too, the time has come to put by forever the paraphernalia of images, candles, and all the trinkets used in the pagan ceremonial which has so quenched our spirituality, and to seek the undivided garment of the Christ."

"Indeed!" murmured Lafelle.

"The world to-day, Monsignor, stands at the door of a new era, an era which promises a grander concept of God and religion, the tie which binds all to Him, than has ever before been known. We are thinking. We are pondering. We are delving, studying, reflecting. And we are at last beginning to work with true scientific precision and system. As in chemistry, mathematics, and the physical sciences, so in matters religious, we are beginning to *prove* our working hypotheses.

And so a new spiritual enlightenment is come. People are awaking to a dim perception of the meaning of spiritual life, as exemplified in Jesus Christ. And they are vaguely beginning to see that it is possible to every one. The abandonment of superstition, religious and other, has resulted in such a sudden expansion of the human mind that the most marvelous material progress the world has ever witnessed has come swiftly upon us, and we live more intensely in a single hour to-day than our fathers lived in weeks before us. Oh, yes, we are already growing tired of materiality. The world is not yet satisfied. We are not happy. But, Monsignor, let not the Church boast itself that the acceptance of her mediaeval dogmas will meet the world's great need. That need will be met, I think, only as we more and more clearly perceive the tremendous import of the mission of Jesus, and learn how to grasp and apply the marvelous Christ-principle which he used and told us we should likewise employ to work out our salvation."

During Father Waite's earnest talk Lafelle sat with his eyes fixed upon Carmen. When the ex-priest concluded, the churchman ignored him and vouchsafed no reply.

"Well, Monsignor?" said the girl, after waiting some moments in expectation.

Lafelle smiled paternally. Then, nodding his shapely head, he said in a pleading tone:

"Have I no champion here? Would you, too, suddenly abolish the Church, Catholic and Protestant alike? Why, my dear child, with your ideals—which no one appreciates more highly than I—do you continue to persecute me so cruelly? Can not you, too, sense the unsoundness of the views just now so eloquently voiced?"

"That is cant, Monsignor! You speak wholly without authority or proof, as is your wont."

The man winced slightly. "Well," he said, "there are several hundred million Catholics and Protestants in the world to-day. Would you presume to say that they are all mistaken, and that you are right? Something of an assumption, is it not? Indeed, I think you set the Church an example in that respect."

"Monsignor, there were once several hundred millions who believed that the earth was flat, and that the sun revolved about it. Were they mistaken?"

"Yes. But the—"

"And, Monsignor, there are billions to-day who believe that matter is a solid, substantial reality, and that it possesses life and sensation. There are billions who believe that the physical

eyes see, and the ears hear, and the hands feel. Yet these beliefs are all capable of scientific refutation. Did you know that?"

"I am not unacquainted with philosophical speculation," he returned suggestively.

"This is not mere speculation, Monsignor," put in Father Waite. "The beliefs of the human mind are its fetish. Such beliefs become in time national customs, and men defend them with frenzy, utterly wrong and undemonstrable though they be. Then they remain as the incubus of true progress. By them understanding becomes degraded, and the human mind narrows and shrinks. And the mind that clings to them will then mercilessly hunt out the dissenting minds of its heretical neighbors and stone them to death for disagreeing. So now, you would stone me for obeying Christ's command to take up my bed on the Sabbath day."

Lafelle heaved a great sigh. "Still you blazon my faults," he said in a tone of mock sadness, and addressing Carmen. "But, like the Church which you persecute, I shall endure. We have been martyred throughout the ages. And we are very patient. Our wayward children forsake us," nodding toward Father Waite, "and yet we welcome their return when they have tired of the husks. The press teems with slander against us; we are reviled from east to west. But our reply is that such slander and untruth can best be met by our leading individual lives of such an exemplary nature as to cause all men to be attracted by our holy light."

"I agree with you, Monsignor," quickly replied Carmen. "Scurrilous attacks upon the Church but make it a martyr. Vilification returns upon the one who hurls the abuse. One can not fling mud without soiling one's hands. I oppose not men, but human systems of thought. Whatever is good will stand, and needs no defense. Whatever is erroneous must go. And there is no excuse, for salvation is at hand."

"Salvation? And your thought regarding that?" he said in a skirmishing tone.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," she replied earnestly. *"To him that soweth righteousness*—right thinking—*shall be a sure reward.* Ah, Monsignor, do you at heart believe that the religion of the Christ depends upon doctrines, signs, dogmas? No, it does not. But signs and proofs naturally and inevitably follow the right understanding of Jesus' teachings, even according to these words: *These signs shall follow them that believe.* Paul gave the formula for salvation, when he said: *But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed*

into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Can you understand that? Can you see that, taking Jesus as our model and following his every command—seeing Him only, the Christ-principle, which is God, good, without any admixture of evil—we change, even though slowly, from glory to glory, step by step, until we rise out of all sense of evil and death? And this is done by the Spirit which is God."

"Yes," said Father Waite, taking up the conversation when she paused. "Even the poorest human being can understand that. Why, then, the fungus growth of traditions, ceremonies, rites and forms which have sprung up about the Master's simple words? Why the wretched formalistic worship throughout the world? Why the Church's frigid, lifeless traditions, so inconsistent with the enlarging sense of God which marks this latest century? The Church has yet to prove its utility, its right to exist and to pose as the religious teacher of mankind. Else must it fall beneath the axe which is even now at the root of the barren tree of theology. Her theology, like the Judaism of the Master's day, has no prophets, no poets, no singers. And her priests, as in his time, have sunk into a fanatical observance of ritual and form."

"And yet," observed Carmen, "you still urge me to unite with it."

Lafelle was growing weary. Moreover, it erked him sore to be made a target for the unassailable logic of the apostate Waite. Then, too, the appearance of the ex-priest there that afternoon in company with this girl who held such radical views regarding religious matters portended in his thought the possibility of a united assault upon the foundations of his cherished system. This girl was now a menace. She nettled and exasperated him. Yet, he could not let her alone. Did he have the power to silence her? He thought he had.

"Have you finished with me?" he asked, with a show of gaiety. "If so, I will depart."

"Yes," replied Carmen, "you may go now."

Lafelle paled. He had not expected that reply. He was stung to the quick. What! dismissed like a lackey? He, Monsignor, a dignitary of Holy Church? He could not believe it! He turned upon the girl and her companion, furious with anger.

"I have been very patient with you both," he said in a voice that he could not control. "But there is a reasonable limit. Abuse the Church as you will, the fact remains that the world fears her and trembles before her awful voice! Why? Because the world recognizes her mighty power, a power of unified millions of human beings and exhaustless wealth. She is

the leader, the guide, the teacher, the supreme object of worship of a countless army who would lay down their lives to-day for her. Her subjects gather from every quarter of the globe. They are English, French, German, American—*but they are Catholics first!* Emperor, King, Ruler, or Government—all are alike subject to her supreme, divine authority! Nationalities, customs, family ties—all melt away before her, to whom her followers bow in loyal consecration. The power which her supreme leader and head wields is all but omnipotent! He is by divine decree Lord of the world. Hundreds of millions bend before his throne and offer him their hearts and swords! I say, you have good reason to quake! Aye, America has reason to fear! The onward march of Holy Church is not disturbed by the croaking calumnies of such as you who would assault her! And to you I say, beware!" His face was purple, as he stopped and mopped his damp brow.

"What we have to beware of, Monsignor," said Father Waite gravely, "is the steady encroachments of Rome in this country, with her weapons of fear, ignorance, and intolerance—"

"Intolerance! You speak of intolerance! Why, in this country, whose Constitution provided toleration for every form of religion—"

Carmen had risen and gone to the man. "Monsignor," she said, "the founders of the American nation did provide for religious tolerance—and they were wise according to their light. But we of this day are still wiser, for we have some knowledge of the wonderful working of mental laws. I, too, believe in toleration of opinion. You are welcome to yours, and I to mine. But—and here is the great point—the opinion which Holy Church has held throughout the ages regarding those who do not accept her dogmas is that they are damned, that they are outcasts of heaven, that they merit the stake and rack. The Church's hatred of heretics has been deadly. Her thought concerning them has not been that of love, such as Jesus sent out to all who did not agree with him, but deadly, suggestive hatred. Now our Constitution does *not* provide for tolerance of hate and murder-thoughts, which enter the minds of the unsuspecting and work destruction there in the form of disease, disaster, and death. That is what we object to in you, Monsignor. You murder your opponents with your poisonous thoughts. And toward such thoughts we have a right to be very intolerant, even to the point of destroying them in human mentalities. Again I say, I war not against people, but against the murderous carnal thought of the human mind!"

Monsignor had fallen back before the girl's strong words.

His face had grown black, and his hands were working convulsively.

"Monsignor," continued Carmen in a low, steady voice, "you have threatened me with something which you apparently hold over me. You are very like the people of Galilee: if you can not refute by reason, you would circumvent by law, by the Constitution, by Congress. That failing, you would destroy. Instead of threatening us with the flames of hell for not being good, why do you not show us by the great example of Jesus' love how to be so? Are you manifesting love now—or the carnal mind? I judge your Church by such as manifest it to me. How, then, shall I judge it by you to-day?"

He rose slowly and took her by the hand. "I beg your pardon," he said in a strange, unnatural voice. "I was hasty. As you see, I am zealous. Naturally, I resent misjudgment. And I assure you that you quite misunderstand me, and the Church which I represent. But—I may come again?"

"Surely, Monsignor," returned the girl heartily. "A debate such as this is stimulating, don't you think so?"

He bowed and turned to go. Just then the Beaubien appeared.

"Ah, Monsignor," she said lightly, as she stepped into the room. "You are exclusive. Why have you avoided me since your return to America?"

"Madam," replied Lafelle, in some confusion, "no one regrets more than I the press of business which necessitated it. But your little friend has told me I may return."

"Always welcome, Monsignor," replied the Beaubien, scanning him narrowly as she accompanied him to the door. "By the way, you forgot our little compact, did you not?" she added coldly.

"Madam, I came out of a sense of duty."

"Of that I have no doubt, Monsignor. *Adieu.*"

She returned again to the music room, where Carmen made her acquainted with Father Waite, and related the conversation with Lafelle. While the girl talked the Beaubien's expression grew serious. Then Carmen launched into her association with the ex-priest, concluding with: "And he must have something to do, right away, to earn his living!"

The Beaubien laughed. She always did when Carmen, no matter how serious the conversation, infused her sparkling animation into it. "That isn't nearly as important as to know what he thinks about Monsignor's errand here this afternoon, dearie," she said.

Father Waite bowed. "Madam," he said with great seriousness, "I would be very wide awake."

The Beaubien studied him for a moment. "Why?" she asked.

"I think—I think—" He hesitated, and looked at Carmen.

"Well?" impatiently.

"I think he—has been greatly angered by—this girl—and by my presence here."

"Ah!" Her face set hard. Then abruptly: "What are you going to do now?"

"I have funds enough to keep me some weeks, Madam, while making plans for the future."

"Then remain where I can keep in touch with you."

For the Beaubien had just returned from a two hours' ride with J. Wilton Ames, and she felt that she needed a friend.

CHAPTER 20

THE Beaubien sat in the rounded window of the breakfast room. Carmen nestled at her feet. The maid had just removed the remains of the light luncheon.

"Dearest, please, *please* don't look so serious!"

The Beaubien twined her fingers through the girl's flowing locks. "I will try, girlie," she said, though her voice broke.

Carmen looked up into her face with a wistful yearning. "Will you not tell me?" she pleaded. "Ever since Monsignor Lafelle and Father Waite were here you have been so quiet; and that was nearly a week ago. I know I can help, if you will only let me."

"How would you help, dearie?" asked the woman absently.

"By knowing that God is everywhere, and that evil is unreal and powerless," came the quick, invariable reply.

"My sweet child! Can nothing shake your faith?"

"No. Why, if I were chained to a stake, with fire all around me, I'd know it wasn't true!"

"I think you are chained—and the fire has been kindled," said the woman in a voice that fell to a whisper.

"Then your thought is wrong—all wrong! And wrong thought just *can't* be externalized to me, for I know that 'There shall no mischief happen to the righteous,' that is, to the right-thinking. And I think right."

"I'm sure you do, child." The Beaubien got up and walked slowly around the room, as if to summon her strength. Then she returned to her chair.

"I'm going to tell you," she said firmly. "You are right, and I have been wrong. It concerns you. And you have help that I have not. I—I have lost a great deal of money."

Carmen laughed in relief. "Well, dear me! that's nothing."

The Beaubien smiled sadly. "I agree with you. Mr. Ames may have my money. I have discovered in the past few months that there are better things in life. But—" her lips tightened, and her eyes half closed—"he can *not* have you!"

"Oh! He wants *me?*"

"Yes. Listen, child: I know not why it is, but you awaken something in every life into which you come. The woman I was a year ago and the woman I am to-day meet almost as strangers now. Why? The only answer I can give is, you. I don't know what you did to people in South America; I can only surmise. Yet of this I am certain, wherever you went you made a path of light. But the effect you have on people differs with differing natures. Just why this is, I do not know. It must have something to do with those mental laws of which I am so ignorant, and of which you know so much."

Carmen looked at her in wondering anticipation. The Beaubien smiled down into the face upturned so lovingly, and went on:

"From what you have told me about your priest, José, I know that you were the light of his life. He loved you to the complete obliteration of every other interest. You have not said so; but I know it. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? On the other hand, that heartless Diego—his mad desire to get possession of you was only animal. Why should you, a child of heaven, arouse such opposite sentiments?"

"Dearest," said the girl, laying her head on the woman's knees, "that isn't what's worrying you."

"No—but I think of it so often. And, as for me, you have turned me inside-out."

Carmen laughed again merrily. "Well, I think this side wears better, don't you?"

"It is softer—it may not," returned the woman gently. "But I have no desire to change back." She bent and kissed the brown hair. "Mr. Ames and I have been—no, not friends. I had no higher ideals than he, and I played his game with him. Then you came. And at a time when he had involved me heavily financially. The Colombian revolution—his cotton deal—he must have foreseen, he is so uncanny—he must have known that to involve me meant control whenever he might need me! He needs me now, for I stand between him and you."

"You don't!" Carmen was on her feet. "God stands between me and every form of evil!" She sat down on the arm of the Beaubien's chair. "Is it because you will not let him have me that he threatens to ruin you financially?"

"Yes. He couldn't ruin me in reputation, for—" her voice again faded to a whisper. "I haven't any."

"That is not true!" cried the girl, throwing her arms about the woman's neck. "Your true self is just coming to light! Why, it is beautiful! And I love it so!"

The Beaubien suddenly burst into a flood of tears. The strain of weeks was at last manifesting. "Oh, I have been in the gutter!—he dragged me through the mire!—and I let him! I did it for money, money! I gave my soul for it! I schemed and plotted with him; I ruined and pillaged with him; I murdered reputations and blasted lives with him, that I might get money, dirty, blood-stained money! Oh, Carmen, I didn't know what I was doing, until you came! And now I'd hang on the cross if I could undo it! But it's too late! And he has you and me in his clutches, and he is crushing us!" She bent her head and sobbed violently.

Carmen bent over the weeping woman. "Be still, and *know* that I am God." The Beaubien raised her head and smiled feebly through her tears.

"He governs all, dearest," whispered Carmen, as she drew the woman's head to her breast. "And He is *everywhere.*"

"Let us go away!" cried the Beaubien, starting up.

"Flee from our problems?" returned the girl. "But they would follow. No, we will stay and meet them, right here!"

The Beaubien's hand shook as she clasped Carmen's. "I can't turn to Kane, nor to Fitch, nor Weston. They are all afraid of him. I've ruined Gannette myself—for him! I've ruined Mrs. Hawley-Crowles—"

"Mrs. Hawley-Crowles!" exclaimed Carmen, rising.

"Oh, don't, don't!" sobbed the suffering woman, clinging to the girl.

"But—how did you do that?"

"I lent her money—took her notes—which I sold again to Mr. Ames."

"Well, you can buy them back, can't you? And return the money to her?"

"I can't! I've tried! He refuses to sell them!"

"Then give her your own money."

"Most that I have is mortgaged to him on the investments I made at his direction," wailed the woman.

"Well?"

"I will try—I am trying, desperately! I will save her, if I can! But—there is Monsignor Lafelle!"

"Is he working with Mr. Ames?"

"He works with and against him. And I'm sure he holds something over you and me. But, I will send for him—I will renew my vows to his Church—anything to—"

"Listen, dearest," interrupted Carmen. "I will go to Mr. Ames myself. If I am the cause of it all, I can—"

"You will not!" cried the Beaubien fiercely. "I—I would kill him!"

"Why, mother dearest!"

The desperate woman put her head in the girl's lap and sobbed bitterly.

"There is a way out, dearest," whispered Carmen. "I *know* there is, no matter what seems to be or to happen, for 'underneath are the everlasting arms.' I am not afraid. Mrs. Hawley-Crowles told me this morning that Mrs. Ames intends to give a big reception next week. Of course we will go. And then I will see Mr. Ames and talk with him. Don't fear, dearest. He will do it for me. And—it will be right, I know."

And Carmen sat with the repentant woman all that day, struggling with her to close the door upon her sordid past, and to open it wide to "that which is to come."

* * * * * *

The days following were busy ones for many with whom our story is concerned. Every morning saw Carmen on her way to the Beaubien, to comfort and advise. Every afternoon found her yielding gently to the relentless demands of society, or to the tiresome calls of her thoroughly ardent wooer, the young Duke of Altern. Carmen would have helped him if she could. But she found so little upon which to build. And she bore with him largely on account of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, for whom she and the Beaubien were now daily laboring. The young man tacitly assumed proprietorship over the girl, and all society was agog with expectation of the public announcement of their engagement.

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles still came and went upon a tide of unruffled joy. The cornucopia of Fortune lay full at her feet. Her broker, Ketchim, basked in the sunlight of her golden smiles—and quietly sold his own Simití stock on the strength of her patronage. Society fawned and smirked at her approach, and envied her brilliant success, as it copied the cut of her elaborate gowns—all but the deposed Mrs. Ames and her unlovely daughter, who sulked and hated, until they received a call from Monsignor Lafelle. This was shortly after that gentleman's meeting with Carmen and Father Waite in the Beaubien mansion. And he left the Ames home with an ominous look on his face. "The girl is a menace," he muttered, "and she deserves her fate."

The Ames grand reception, promising to be the most brilliant event of the year, barring the famous *Bal de l'Opéra*, was set for Thursday. But neither Mrs. Hawley-Crowles nor Carmen had received invitations. To the former it was evident that there was some mistake. "For it can't be possible that the

hussy doesn't intend to invite us!" she argued. But Thursday morning came, and found Mrs. Hawley-Crowles drenched with tears of anxiety and vexation. "I'd call her up and ask, if I dared," she groaned. But her courage failed. And, to the amazement of the exclusive set, the brilliant function was held without the presence of its acknowledged leaders, Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and her ward, the Inca princess.

* * * * * *

On Wednesday night Harris arrived from Denver. His arrival was instantly made known to J. Wilton Ames, who, on the morning following, summoned both him and Philip O. Ketchim to his private office. There were present, also, Monsignor Lafelle and Alonzo Hood. Harris and Ketchim came together. The latter was observed to change color as he timidly entered the room and faced the waiting audience.

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Ames genially, after cordially shaking hands with them and introducing the churchman. Then, turning to Harris, "You are on your way to Colombia, I learn. Going down to inaugurate work on the Simití holdings, I suppose?"

Harris threw a quick glance at Ketchim. The latter sat blank, wondering if there were any portions of the earth to which Ames's long arms did not reach.

"As a matter of fact," Ames continued, leaning back in his chair and pressing the tips of his fingers together before him, "a hitch seems to have developed in Simití proceedings. I am interested, Mr. Ketchim," turning suddenly and sharply upon that gentleman, "because my brokers have picked up for me several thousand shares of the stock."

Ketchim's hair began to rise.

"But," proceeded Ames calmly, "now that I have put money into it, I learn that the Simití Company has no property whatever in Colombia."

A haze slowly gathered before Ketchim's eyes. His ears hummed. His heart throbbed violently. "How do you make that out, Mr. Ames?" he heard Harris say in a voice that seemed to come from an infinite distance. "I myself saw the title papers which old Rosendo had, and saw them transferred to Mr. Ketchim for the Simití Company. Moreover, I personally visited the mine in question."

"La Libertad? Quite so," returned Ames. "But, here's the rub. The property was relocated by this Rosendo, and he secured title to it under the name of the Chicago mine. It was that name which deceived the clerks in the Department of Mines in Cartagena, and caused them to issue title, not knowing that it really was the famous old La Libertad."

"Well, I don't see that there is any ground for confusion."

"Simply this," returned Ames evenly: "La Libertad mine, since the death of its former owner, Don Ignacio de Rincón, has belonged to the Church."

"What!" Harris was on his feet. "By what right does it belong to the Church?"

"By the ancient law of *'en manos muertas,'* my friend," replied Ames, unperturbed.

"Good Lord! what's that?"

"Our friend, Monsignor Lafelle, representing the Church, will explain," said Ames, waving a hand toward that gentleman.

Lafelle cleared his throat. "I deeply regret this unfortunate situation, gentlemen," he began. "But, as Mr. Ames has pointed out, the confusion came about through issuing title to the mine under the name Chicago. Don Ignacio de Rincón, long before his departure from Colombia after the War of Independence, drew up his last will, and, following the established custom among wealthy South Americans of that day, bequeathed this mine, La Libertad, and other property, to the Church, invoking the old law of *'en manos muertas'* which, being translated, means, 'in dead hands.' Pious Catholics of many lands have done the same throughout the centuries. Such a bequest places property in the custody of the Church; and it may never be sold or disposed of in any way, but all revenue from it must be devoted to the purchase of Masses for the souls in purgatory. It was through the merest chance, I assure you, that your mistake was brought to light. Knowing that our friend, Mr. Ames, had purchased stock in your company, I took the pains to investigate while in Cartagena recently, and made the discovery which unfortunately renders your claim to the mine quite null."

"God a'mighty!" exploded Harris. "Did you know this?" turning savagely upon the paralyzed Ketchim.

"That," interposed Ames with cruel significance, "is a matter which he will explain in court."

Fleeting visions of the large blocks of stock which he had sold; of the widows, orphans, and indigent clergymen whom he had involved; of the notes which the banks held against him; of his questionable deals with Mrs. Hawley-Crowles; and of the promiscuous peddling of his own holdings in the now ruined company, rushed over the clouded mind of this young genius of high finance. His tongue froze, though his trembling body dripped with perspiration. Somehow he got to his feet. Somehow he found the door, and groped his way to a descending elevator. And somehow he lived through that terror-haunted day and night.

But very early next morning, while his blurred eyes were drinking in the startling report of the Simití Company's collapse, as set forth in the newspaper which he clutched in his shaking hand, the maid led in a soft-stepping gentleman, who laid a hand upon his quaking shoulder and read to him from a familiar-looking document an irresistible invitation to take up lodgings in the city jail.

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There were other events forward at the same time, which came to light that fateful next day. It was noon when Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, after a night of mingled worry and anger over the deliberate or unintentional exclusion of herself and Carmen from the Ames reception the preceding night, descended to her combined breakfast and luncheon. At her plate lay the morning mail, including a letter from France. She tore it open, hastily scanned it, then dropped with a gasp into her chair.

"Father—married to—a French—adventuress! Oh!"

The long-cherished hope of a speedy inheritance of his snug fortune lay blasted at her feet.

The telephone bell rang sharply, and she rose dully to answer it. The call came from the city editor of one of the great dailies. "It is reported," said the voice, "that your ward, Miss Carmen Ariza, is the illegitimate daughter of a negro priest, now in South America. We would like your denial, for we learn that it was for this reason that you and the young lady were not included among the guests at the Ames reception last evening."

Mrs. Hawley-Crowles's legs tottered under her, as she blindly wandered from the telephone without replying. Carmen—the daughter of a priest! Her father a negro—her mother, what? She, a mulatto, illegitimate—!

The stunned woman mechanically took up the morning paper which lay on the table. Her glance was at once attracted to the great headlines announcing the complete exposure of the Simití bubble. Her eyes nearly burst from her head as she grasped its fatal meaning to her. With a low, inarticulate sound issuing from her throat, she turned and groped her way back to her boudoir.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, the automobile in which Carmen was speeding to the Beaubien mansion was approached by a bright, smiling young woman, as it halted for a moment at a street corner. Carmen recognized her as a reporter for one of the evening papers, who had called often at the Hawley-Crowles mansion that season for society items.

"Isn't it fortunate!" exclaimed the young reporter. "I was

on my way to see you. Our office received a report this morning from some source that your father—you know, there has been some mystery about your parentage—that he was really a priest, of South America. His name—let me think—what did they say it was?"

"José?" laughed the innocent girl, utterly unsuspecting. The problem of her descent had really become a source of amusement to her.

"It began with a D, if I am not mistaken. I'm not up on Spanish names," the young woman returned pleasantly.

"Oh, perhaps you mean Diego."

"That's it! Was that your father's name? We're very much interested to know."

"Well, I'm sure I can't say. It might have been."

"Then you don't deny it?"

"No; how can I?" she said, smiling. "I never knew him."

"But—you think it was, don't you?"

"Well, I don't believe it was Padre Diego—he wasn't a good man."

"Then you knew him?"

"Oh, very well! I was in his house, in Banco. He used to insist that I was his child."

"I see. By the way, you knew a woman named Jude, didn't you? Here in the city."

"Yes, indeed!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Do you know where she is?"

"No. But she took you out of a house down on—"

"Yes. And I've tried to find her ever since."

"You know Father Waite, too, the ex-priest?"

"Oh, yes, very well. We're good friends."

"You and he going to work together, I suppose?"

"Why, I'm sure I don't know. He's very unsettled."

"H'm! yes. Well, I thank you very much. You think this Diego might have been your father? That is, you can't say positively that he wasn't?"

"I can't say positively, no. But now I must go. You can come up to the house and talk about South America, if you want to."

She nodded pleasantly, and the car moved away. The innocent, ingenuous girl was soon to learn what modern news-gathering and dissemination means in this great Republic. But she rode on, happy in the thought that she and the Beaubien were formulating plans to save Mrs. Hawley-Crowles.

"We'll arrange it somehow," said the Beaubien, looking up from her papers when Carmen entered. "Go, dearie, and play the organ while I finish this. Then I will return home with you to have a talk with Mrs. Hawley-Crowles."

For hours the happy girl lingered at the beloved organ. The Beaubien at her desk below stopped often to listen. And often she would hastily brush away the tears, and plunge again into her papers. "I suppose I should have told Mrs. Hawley-Crowles," she said. "But I couldn't give her any hope. And even now it's very uncertain. Ames *will* yield! I'll force him to! He knows I can expose him! And yet," she reflected sadly, "who would believe *me?*" The morning papers lay still unread upon her table.

Late in the afternoon the Beaubien with Carmen entered her car and directed the chauffeur to drive to the Hawley-Crowles home. As they entered a main thoroughfare they heard the newsboys excitedly crying extras.

"Horrible suicide! Double extra! Big mining scandal! Society woman blows out brains! Double extra!"

Of a sudden a vague, unformed presentiment of impending evil came to the girl. She half rose, and clutched the Beaubien's hand. Then there flitted through her mind like a beam of light the words of the psalmist: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." She sank back against the Beaubien's shoulder and closed her eyes.

The car rolled on. Presently the chauffeur turned and said something through the speaking tube.

"What!" cried the Beaubien, springing from the seat. "Merciful heaven! Stop and get a paper at once!" The chauffeur complied.

A loud cry escaped her as she took the sheet and glanced at the startling headlines. Mrs. James Hawley-Crowles, financially ruined, and hurled to disgrace from the pinnacle of social leadership by the awful exposure of the parentage of her ward, had been found in her bedroom, dead, with a revolver clasped in her cold hand.

CARMEN ARIZA

BOOK 4

WATCHMAN, what of the night?
The watchman said, The morning cometh.
—*Isaiah.*

CARMEN ARIZA

CHAPTER 1

THE chill winds of another autumn swirled through the masonry-lined cañons of the metropolis and sighed among the stark trees of its deserted parks. They caught up the tinted leaves that dropped from quivering branches and tossed them high, as Fate wantons with human hopes before she blows her icy breath upon them. They shrieked among the naked spars of the *Cossack*, drifting with her restless master far out upon the white-capped waves. They moaned in low-toned agony among the marble pillars of the Crowles mausoleum, where lay in pitying sleep the misguided woman whose gods of gold and tinsel had betrayed her.

On the outskirts of the Bronx, in a newly opened suburb, a slender girl, with books and papers under her arm, walked slowly against the sharp wind, holding her hat with her free hand, and talking rapidly to a young man who accompanied her. Toward them came an old negro, leaning upon a cane. As he stepped humbly aside to make room, the girl looked up. Then, without stopping, she slipped a few coins into his coat pocket as she passed.

The negro stood in dumb amazement. He was poor—his clothes were thin and worn—but he was not a beggar—he had asked nothing. The girl turned and threw back a smile to him. Then of a sudden there came into the old man's wrinkled, care-lined face such a look, such a comprehension of that love which knows neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor Barbarian, as would have caused even the Rabbis, at the cost of defilement, to pause and seek its heavenly meaning.

A few blocks farther on the strong wind sternly disputed the girl's right to proceed, and she turned with a merry laugh to her companion. But as she stood, the wind fell, leaving a heap of dead leaves about her feet. Glancing down, something caught her eye. She stooped and took up a two-dollar bill.

Her companion threw her a wondering look; but the girl

made no comment. In silence they went on, until a few minutes more of brisk walking brought them to a newly built, stucco-coated bungalow. Running rapidly up the steps, the girl threw wide the door and called, "Mother dear!"

The Beaubien rose from her sewing to receive the hearty embrace. "Well, dearie?" she said, devouring the sparkling creature with eager eyes. "What luck?"

"We're registered! Lewis begins his law course at once, and I may take what I wish. And Mr. Hitt's coming to call to-night and bring a friend, a Mr. Haynerd, an editor. What's Jude got for supper? My! I'm starved."

The Beaubien drew the girl to her and kissed her again and again. Then she glanced over her shoulder at the man with a bantering twinkle in her eyes and said, "Don't you wish you could do that? But you can't."

"Yes he can, too, mother," asserted the girl.

Father Waite sighed. "I'm afraid it wouldn't look well," he said. "And, besides, I don't dare lose my heart to her."

With a final squeeze the girl tore herself from the Beaubien's reluctant arms and hurried to the little kitchen. "What is it to-night, Jude?" she demanded, catching the domestic in a vigorous embrace.

"Hist!" said Jude, holding up a finger. "It's a secret. I'm afraid you'd tell him."

"Not a word—I promise."

"Well, then, liver and bacon, with floating island," she whispered, very mysteriously.

"Oh, goody!" cried Carmen. "He just loves them both!"

Returning to the little parlor, Carmen encountered the fixed gaze of both the Beaubien and Father Waite. "Well?" she demanded, stopping and looking from one to the other.

"What about that two dollars?" said the Beaubien, in a tone of mock severity.

"Oh," laughed the girl, running to the woman and seating herself in the waiting lap, "he told, didn't he? Can't I ever trust you with a secret?" in a tone of rebuke, turning to the man.

"Surely," he replied, laughing; "and I should not have divulged this had I not seen in the incident something more than mere chance—something meant for us all."

Then he became serious. "I—I think I have seen the working of a stupendous mental law—am I not right?" addressing the girl. "You saw a need, and met it, unsolicited. You found your own in another's good."

The girl smiled at the Beaubien without replying. "What about it, dearie?" the latter asked tenderly.

"She need not answer," said Father Waite, "for we know. She but cast her bread upon the unfathomable ocean of love, and it returned to her, wondrously enriched."

"If you are going to talk about me, I shall not stay," declared Carmen, rising. "I'm going out to help Jude." And she departed for the kitchen, but not without leaving a smile for each of them as she went. And they understood.

The Beaubien and Father Waite remained some moments in silence. Then the woman spoke. "I am learning," she said. "She is the light that is guiding me. This little incident which you have just related is but a manifestation of the law of love by which she lives. She gave, unasked, and with no desire to be seen and advertised. It returned to her ten-fold. It is always so with her. There was no chance, no miracle, no luck about it. She herself did nothing. It was—it was—only the working of her beloved Christ-principle. Oh, Lewis! if we only knew—"

"We *shall* know, Madam!" declared the man vehemently. "Her secret is but the secret of Jesus himself, which was open to a world too dull to comprehend. Carmen shall teach us. And," his eyes brightening, "to that end I have been formulating a great plan. That's why I've asked Hitt to come here to-night. I have a scheme to propose. Remember, my dear friend, we are true searchers; and 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' Our love of truth and real good is so great that, like the consuming desire of the Jewish nation, it is *bound* to bring the Christ!"

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For three months the Beaubien and Carmen had dwelt together in this lowly environment; and here they had found peace, the first that the tired woman had known since childhood. The sudden culmination of those mental forces which had ejected Carmen from society, crushed Ketchim and a score of others, and brought the deluded Mrs. Hawley-Crowles to a bitter end, had left the Beaubien with dulled sensibilities. Even Ames himself had been shocked into momentary abandonment of his relentless pursuit of humanity by the unanticipated *dénoûment.* But when he had sufficiently digested the newspaper accounts wherein were set forth in unsparing detail the base rumors of the girl's parentage and of her removal from a brothel before her sudden elevation to social heights, he rose in terrible wrath and prepared to hunt down to the death the perpetrators of the foul calumny. Whence had come this tale, which even the girl could not refute? From Lafelle? He had sailed for Europe—though but a day before. Ketchim? The man was cringing like a craven murderer in his

cell, for none dared give him bail. Reed? Harris? Was it revenge for his own sharp move in regard to La Libertad? He would have given all he possessed to lay his heavy hands upon the guilty ones! The editors of the great newspapers, perhaps? Ames raged like a wounded lion in the office of every editor in the city. But they were perfectly safe, for the girl, although she told a straightforward story, could not say positively that the published statements concerning her were false. Yet, though few knew it, there were two city editors and several reporters who, in the days immediately following, found it convenient to resign their positions and leave the city before the awful wrath of the powerful man.

Then Ames turned upon his wife. And, after weeks of terror, that browbeaten woman, her hair whitening under the terrible persecution of her relentless master, fled secretly, with her terrified daughter, to England, whither the stupified Duke of Altern and his scandalized mother had betaken themselves immediately following the exposé. Thereupon Ames's lawyer drew up a bill of divorce, alleging desertion, and laid it before the judge who fed from his master's hand.

Meantime, the devouring wrath of Ames swept like a prairie fire over the dry, withering stalks of the smart set. He vowed he would take Carmen and flaunt her in the faces of the miserable character-assassins who had sought her ruin! He swore he would support her with his untold millions and force society to acknowledge her its queen! He had it in his power to wreck the husband of every arrogant, supercilious dame in the entire clique! He commenced at once with the unfortunate Gannette. The latter, already tottering, soon fell before the subtle machinations of Hodson and his able cohorts. Then, as a telling example to the rest, Ames pursued him to the doors of the Lunacy Commission, and rested not until that body had condemned his victim to a living death in a state asylum. Kane, Fitch, and Weston fled to cover, and concentrated their guns upon their common enemy. The Beaubien alone stood out against him for three months. Her existence was death in life; but from the hour that she first read the newspaper intelligence regarding Carmen and the unfortunate Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, she hid the girl so completely that Ames was effectually balked in his attempts at drastic vindication in her behalf.

But this served only to intensify his anger, and he thereupon turned its full force upon the lone woman. Driven to desperation, she stood at length at bay and hurled at him her remaining weapon. Again the social set was rent, and this time by the report that the black cloud of bigamy hung over Ames. It was

a fat season for the newspapers, and they made the most of it. As a result, several of them found themselves with libel suits on their hands. The Beaubien herself was confronted with a suit for defamation of character, and was obliged to testify before the judge whom Ames owned outright that she had but the latter's word for the charge, and that, years since, in a moment of maudlin sentimentalism, he had confessed to her that, as far as he knew, the wife of his youth was still living. The suit went against her. Ames then took his heavy toll, and retired within himself to sulk and plan future assaults and reprisals.

The Beaubien, crushed, broken, sick at heart, gathered up the scant remains of her once large fortune, disposed of her effects, and withdrew to the outskirts of the city. She would have left the country, but for the fact that the tangled state of her finances necessitated her constant presence in New York while her lawyers strove to bring order out of chaos and placate her raging persecutor. To flee meant complete abandonment of her every financial resource to Ames. And so, with the assistance of Father Waite and Elizabeth Wall, who placed themselves at once under her command, she took a little house, far from the scenes of her troubles, and quietly removed thither with Carmen.

One day shortly thereafter a woman knocked timidly at her door. Carmen saw the caller and fled into her arms. "It's Jude!" she cried joyously.

The woman had come to return the string of pearls which the girl had thrust into her hands on the night of the Charity Ball. Nobody knew she had them. She had not been able to bring herself to sell them. She had wanted—oh, she knew not what, excepting that she wanted to see again the girl whose image had haunted her since that eventful night when the strange child had wandered into her abandoned life. Yes, she would have given her testimony as to Carmen; but who would have believed her, a prostitute? And—but the radiant girl gathered her in her arms and would not let her go without a promise to return.

And return she did, many times. And each time there was a change in her. The Beaubien always forced upon her a little money and a promise to come back. It developed that Jude was cooking in a cheap down-town restaurant. "Why not for us, mother, if she will?" asked Carmen one day. And, though the sin-stained woman demurred and protested her unworthiness, yet the love that knew no evil drew her irresistibly, and she yielded at length, with her heart bursting.

Then, in her great joy, Carmen's glad cry echoed through the little house: "Oh, mother dear, we're free, we're free!"

But the Beaubien was not free. Night after night her sleepless pillow was wet with bitter tears of remorse, when the accusing angel stood before her and relentlessly revealed each act of shameful meanness, of cruel selfishness, of sordid immorality in her wasted life. And, lastly, the weight of her awful guilt in bringing about the destruction of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles lay upon her soul like a mountain. Oh, if she had only foreseen even a little of it! Oh, that Carmen had come to her before—or not at all! And yet she could not wish that she had never known the girl. Far from it! The day of judgment was bound to come. She saw that now. And, but for the comforting presence of that sweet child, she had long since become a raving maniac. It was Carmen who, in those first long nights of gnawing, corroding remorse, wound her soft arms about the Beaubien's neck, as she lay tossing in mental agony on her bed, and whispered the assurances of that infinite Love which said, "Behold, I make all things new!" It was Carmen who whispered to her of the everlasting arms beneath, and of the mercy reflected by him who, though on the cross, forgave mankind because of their pitiable ignorance. It is ignorance, always ignorance of what constitutes real good, that makes men seek it through wrong channels. The Beaubien had sought good—all the world does—but she had never known that God alone is good, and that men cannot find it until they reflect Him. And so she had "missed the mark." Oh, sinful, mesmerized world, ye shall find Me—the true good—only when ye seek Me with all your heart! And yet, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Only a God who is love could voice such a promise! And Carmen knew; and she hourly poured her great understanding of love into the empty heart of the stricken Beaubien.

Then at last came days of quiet, and planning for the future. The Beaubien would live—yes, but not for herself. Nay, that life had gone out forever, nor would mention of it pass her lips again. The Colombian revolution—her mendacious connivances with Ames—her sinful, impenitent life of gilded vice—aye, the door was now closed against that, absolutely and forever more. She had passed through the throes of a new birth; she had risen again from the bed of anguish; but she rose stripped of her worldly strength. Carmen was now the staff upon which she leaned.

And Carmen—what had been her thought when foul calumny laid its sooty touch upon her? What had been the working of her mind when that world which she had sought to illumine with the light of her own purity had cast her out?

When the blow fell the portals of her mind closed at once against every accusing thought, against every insidious suggestion of defeat, of loss, of dishonor. The arrows of malice, as well as those of self-pity and condemnation, snapped and fell, one by one, as they hurtled vainly against the whole armor of God wherewith the girl stood clad. Self sank into service; and she gathered the bewildered, suffering Beaubien into her arms as if she had been a child. She would have gone to Ames, too, had she been permitted—not to plead for mercy, but to offer the tender consolation and support which, despite the havoc he was committing, she knew he needed even more than the Beaubien herself.

"Paul had been a murderer," she often said, as she sat in the darkness alone with the suffering woman and held her trembling hand. "But he became the chief of apostles. Think of it! When the light came, he shut the door against the past. If he hadn't, dearest, he never could have done what he did. And you, and Mr. Ames, will have to do the same." And this the Beaubien could do, and did, after months of soul-racking struggle. But Ames sat in spiritual darkness, whipped by the foul brood of lust and revenge, knowing not that the mountainous wrath which he hourly heaped higher would some day fall, and bury him fathoms deep.

Throughout the crisis Father Waite had stood by them stanchly. And likewise had Elizabeth Wall. "I've just longed for some reasonable excuse to become a social outcast," the latter had said, as she was helping Carmen one day to pack her effects prior to removing from the Hawley-Crowles mansion. "I long for a hearthstone to which I can attach myself—"

"Then attach yourself to ours!" eagerly interrupted Carmen.

"I'll do it!" declared Miss Wall. "For I know that now you are really going to live—and I want to live as you will. Moreover—" She paused and smiled queerly at the girl—"I am quite in love with your hero, Father Waite, you know."

Harris, too, made a brief call before departing again for Denver. "I've got to hustle for a living now," he explained, "and it's me for the mountains once more! New York is no place for such a tender lamb as I. Oh, I've been well trimmed—but I know enough now to keep away from this burg!"

While he was yet speaking there came a loud ring at the front door of the little bungalow, followed immediately by the entrance of the manager of a down-town vaudeville house. He plunged at once into his errand. He would offer Carmen one hundred dollars a week, and a contract for six months, to appear twice daily in his theater. "She'll make a roar!" he asserted. "Heavens, Madam! but she did put it over the society

ginks." And the Beaubien, shivering at the awful proposal, was glad Harris was there to lead the zealous theatrical man firmly to the door.

Lastly, came one Amos A. Hitt, gratuitously, to introduce himself as one who knew Cartagena and was likely to return there in the not distant future, where he would be glad to do what he might to remove the stain which had been laid upon the name of the fair girl. The genuineness of the man stood out so prominently that the Beaubien took him at once into her house, where he was made acquainted with Carmen.

"Oh," cried the girl, "Cartagena! Why, I wonder—do you know Padre José de Rincón?"

"A priest who once taught there in the University, many years ago? And who was sent up the river, to Simiti? Yes, well."

Then Carmen fell upon his neck; and there in that moment was begun a friendship that grew daily stronger, and in time bore richest fruit. It soon became known that Hitt was giving a course of lectures that fall in the University, covering the results of his archaeological explorations; so Carmen and Father Waite went often to hear him. And the long breaths of University atmosphere which the girl inhaled stimulated a desire for more. Besides, Father Waite had some time before announced his determination to study there that winter, as long as his meager funds would permit.

"I shall take up law," he had one day said. "It will open to me the door of the political arena, where there is such great need of real men, men who stand for human progress, patriotism, and morality. I shall seek office—not for itself, but for the good I can do, and the help I can be in a practical way to my fellow-men. I have a little money. I can work my way through."

Carmen shared the inspiration; and so she, too, with the Beaubien's permission, applied for admittance to the great halls of learning, and was accepted.

* * * * * *

"And now," began Father Waite that evening, when Hitt and his friend had come, and, to the glad surprise of Carmen, Elizabeth Wall had driven up in her car to take the girl for a ride, but had yielded to the urgent invitation to join the little conference, "my plan, in which I invite you to join, is, briefly, *to study this girl!*"

Carmen's eyes opened wide, and her face portrayed blank amazement, as Father Waite stood pointing gravely to her. Nor were the others less astonished—all but the Beaubien. She nodded her head comprehendingly.

"Let me explain," Father Waite continued. "We are assembled here to-night as representatives, now or formerly, of very diversified lines of human thought. I will begin with myself. I have stood as the embodiment of Christly claims, as the active agent of one of the mightiest of human institutions, the ancient Christian Church. For years I have studied its accepted authorities and its all-inclusive assumptions, which embrace heaven, earth, and hell. For years I sought with sincere consecration to apply its precepts to the dire needs of humanity. I have traced its origin in the dim twilight of the Christian era and its progress down through the centuries, through heavy vicissitudes to absolute supremacy, on down through schisms and subsequent decline, to the present hour, when the great system seems to be gathering its forces for a life and death stand in this, the New World. I have known and associated with its dignitaries and its humble priests. I know the policies and motives underlying its quiet movements. I found it incompatible with human progress. And so I withdrew from it my allegiance."

Carmen's thought, as she listened, was busy with another whose experience had not been dissimilar, but about whom the human coils had been too tightly wound to be so easily broken.

"Our scholarly friend, Mr. Hitt," Father Waite went on, "represented the great protest against the abuses and corruption which permeated the system for which I stood. He, like myself, embodied the eternal warfare of the true believer against the heretic. Yet, without my churchly system, I was taught to believe, he and those who share his thought are damned. But, oh, strange anomaly! we both claimed the same divine Father, and accepted the Christly definition of Him as Love. We were two brothers of the same great family, yet calling each other *anathema!*"

He looked over at Hitt and smiled. "And to-day," he continued, "we brothers are humbly meeting on the common ground of failure—failure to understand the Christ, and to meet the needs of our fellow-men with our elaborate systems of theology."

"I heard another priest, years ago, make a similar confession," said Hitt reflectively. "I would he were here to-night!"

"He is here, in spirit," replied Father Waite; "for the same spirit of eager inquiry and humble desire for truth that animates us no doubt moved him. I have reason to think so," he added, looking at Carmen. "For this girl's spiritual development I believe to be very largely his work."

Hitt glanced at Carmen inquiringly. He knew but little as yet of her past association with the priest José.

"You and I, Mr. Hitt, represented the greatest systems of so-called Christian belief," pursued Father Waite. "Madam Beaubien, on the other hand, has represented the world that waits, as yet vainly, for redemption. We have not been able to afford it her. Yet—pardon my frankness in thus referring to you, Madam. It is only to benefit us all—that the means of redemption *have* been brought to her, we must now admit."

All turned and looked at Carmen. She started to speak, but Father Waite raised a detaining hand. "Let me proceed," he said. "Miss Wall represents the weariness of spirit and unrest abroad in the world to-day, the spirit that finds life not worth the while; and Mr. Haynerd voices the cynical disbelief, the agnosticism, of that great class who can not accept the childish tenets of our dogmatic systems of theology, yet who have nothing but the philosophy of stoicism or epicureanism to offer in substitute."

Haynerd bowed and smiled. "You have me correctly classified," he said. "I'm a Yankee, and from Missouri."

"And now, having placed us," said the Beaubien, "how will you classify Carmen?"

Father Waite looked at the girl reverently. "Hers is the leaven," he replied gently, "which has leavened the whole lump.

"My good friends," he went on earnestly, "like all priests and preachers, I have been but a helpless spectator of humanity's troubles. I have longed and prayed to know how to do the works which Jesus is said to have done; yet, at the sick-bed or the couch of death, what could I do—I, to whom the apostolic virtue is supposed to have descended in the long line of succession? I could anoint with holy oil. I could make signs, and pray. I could give promises of remitted sins—though I knew I spoke not truth. I could comfort by voicing the insipid views of our orthodox heaven. And yet I know that what I gave was but mental nostrums, narcotics, to stupify until death might end the suffering. Is that serving Christ? Is that Christianity? Alas, no!"

"And if you were a good orthodox priest," interposed Haynerd, "you would refuse burial to dissenters, and bar from your communion table all who were not of your faith, eh?"

"Yes," sadly. "I would have to, were I consistent; for Catholicism is the only true faith, founded upon the revealed word of God, you know." He smiled pathetically as he looked around at the little group.

"Now," he continued, "you, Mr. Haynerd, are a man of the world. You are not in sympathy with the Church. You are an infidel, an unbeliever. And therefore are you '*anathema*,' you know." He laughed as he went on. "But you can not

deny that at times you think very seriously. And, I may go farther: you long, intensely, for something that the world does not offer. Now, what is it but truth that you are seeking?"

"I want to know," answered Haynerd quickly. "I want to be shown. I am fond of exhibitions of sleight-of-hand and jugglery. But the priestly thaumaturgy that claims to transform a biscuit into the flesh of a man dead some two thousand years, and a bit of grape juice into his blood, irritates me inexpressibly! And so does the jugglery by which your Protestant fellows, Hitt, attempt to reconcile their opposite beliefs. Why, what difference can it possibly make to the Almighty whether we miserable little beings down here are baptised with water, milk, or kerosene, or whether we are immersed, sprinkled, or well soused? Good heavens! for nearly twenty centuries you have been wandering among the non-essentials. Isn't it time to get down to business, and instead of burning at the stake every one who differs with you, try conscientiously to put into practice a few of the simple moral precepts, such as the Golden Rule, and loving one's neighbor as one's self?"

"There," commented Father Waite, "you have a bit of the world's opinion of the Church! Can we say that the censure is not just? Would not Christ himself to-day speak even more scathingly to those who advocate a system of belief that puts blinders on men's minds, and then leads them into the pit of ignorance and superstition?"

"Ye have taken away the key of knowledge," murmured Carmen; "ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

"Just so!" exclaimed Haynerd, looking at the girl who stood as a living protest against all that hampers the expansion of the human mind; that quenches its note of joy, and dulls its enlarging and ever nobler concept of God. "Now I want to know, first, if there is a God; and, if so, what He is, and what His relation is to me. I want to know what I am, and why I am here, and what future I may look forward to, if any. I don't care two raps about a God who can't help me here on earth, who can't set me right and make me happy—cure my ills, meet my needs, and supply a few of the luxuries as well. And if there is a God, and we can meet Him only by dying, then why in the name of common sense all this hullabaloo about death? Why, in that case, death is the grandest thing in life! And I'm for committing suicide right away! But you preacher fellows fight death tooth and nail. You're scared stiff when you contemplate it. You make Christianity just a grand preparation for death. Yet it isn't the gateway to life to you, and you know it! Then why, if you are honest, do you tell such rubbish to your trusting followers?"

"I would remind you," returned Hitt with a little laugh, "that I don't, now."

"Well, friends," interposed Father Waite, "it is to take up for earnest consideration just such questions as Mr. Haynerd propounds, that I have my suggestion to make, namely, that we meet together once or twice a week, or as often as we may agree upon, to search for—" his voice dropped to a whisper—"to search for God, and with this young girl as our guide. For I believe she is very close to Him. The world knows God only by hearsay. Carmen has *proved* Him.

"Men ask why it is," he went on, "that God remains hidden from them; why they can not understand Him. They forget that Jesus revealed God as Love. And, if that is so, in order to know Him all mankind must love their fellow-men. But they go right on hating one another, cheating, abusing, robbing, slaying, persecuting, and still wondering why they don't know God, regardless of the only possible way of ever working out from the evils by which they are beset, if we believe that Jesus told the truth, or was correctly reported." He paused and reflected for a moment. Then:

"The ancient prophet said: 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts.' It is my proposal that we bind ourselves together in such a search. To it we can bring diverse talents. To our vast combined worldly experience, I bring knowledge of the ancient Greek and Latin Fathers, together with Church history. Mr. Hitt brings his command of the Hebrew language and history, and an intimate acquaintance with the ancient manuscripts, and Biblical interpretation, together with a wide knowledge of the physical sciences. Madam Beaubien, Miss Wall, and Mr. Haynerd contribute their earnest, searching, inquisitive spirit, and a knowledge of the world's needs. Moreover, we all come together without bias or prejudice. And Carmen—she contributes that in which we have all been so woefully lacking, and without which we can *never* know God, the rarest, deepest spirituality. She is a living proof of her faith. Shall we undertake the search, my friends? It means a study of her thought, and the basis upon which it rests."

The Beaubien raised her hand to her moist eyes. She was thinking of that worldly coterie which formerly was wont to meet nightly in her magnificent mansion to prey upon their fellows. Oh, how different the spirit of this little gathering!

"You will meet here, with me," she said in a broken voice. "I ask it."

There were none there unacquainted with the sorrows of this penitent, broken woman. Each rose in turn and clasped

her hand. Carmen threw her arms about her neck and kissed her repeatedly.

"You see," said the Beaubien, smiling up through her tears, "what this child's religion is? Would the swinging of incense burners and the mumbling of priestly formulæ enhance it?"

"Jesus said, 'Having seen me ye have seen God,'" said Father Waite.

"And I say," replied the Beaubien, "that having seen this child, you have indeed seen Him."

CHAPTER 2

"I'M afraid," Haynerd was saying, as he and Father Waite were wending their way to the Beaubien home a few evenings later, "that this Carmen is the kind of girl you read about in sentimental novels; the kind who are always just ready to step into heaven, but who count for little in the warfare and struggle of actual mundane existence. You get me? She isn't quite true to life, you know, as a book critic would say of an impossible heroine."

"You mistake, my friend," replied Father Waite warmly. "She is the very kind we would see oftener, were it not for the belief that years bring wisdom, and so, as a consequence, the little child is crushed beneath a load of false beliefs and human laws that make it reflect its mortal parents, rather than its heavenly one."

"But I'd like to see her under stress—"

"Under stress! Good heavens, man! You haven't the slightest conception of the stress she's been under most of her life! But your criticism unconsciously pays her the highest tribute, for her kind never show by word, deed, or look what they are enduring. That frail-appearing girl has stood up under loads that would have flattened you and me out like gold leaf!"

"Well, she doesn't look it!" protested Haynerd tenaciously.

"Of course she doesn't! Her kind never do! She's so far and away ahead of mortals like you and me that she doesn't admit the reality and power of evil—and, believe me, she's got her reasons for not admitting it, too! Don't presume to judge her yet. Only try humbly to attain a little of her understanding and faith; and try to avoid making yourself ridiculous by criticising what you do not comprehend. That, indeed, has been mankind's age-long blunder—and they have thereby made asses of themselves!"

Edward Haynerd, or "Ned," as he was invariably known,

prided himself on being something of a philosopher. And in the name of philosophy he chose to be quixotic. That one who hated the dissimulations and shams of our class aristocracy so cordially should have earned his livelihood—and a good one, too—as publisher of the Social Era, a sprightly weekly chronicle of happenings in fashionable society, would have appeared anomalous in any but a man gifted in the Greek sophistries and their modern innumerable and arid offshoots. Haynerd was a laughing Democritus, an easy-going, even-tempered fellow, doomed to be loved, and by the same graces thoroughly cheated by the world in general. He had in his rapid career of some thirty-five years dipped deeply into things mundane, and had come to the surface, sputtering and blowing, with his face well smeared with mud from the shallow depths. Whereupon he remarked that such an existence was a poor way of serving the Lord, and turned cynic. His wit was his saving grace. It was likewise his capital and stock in trade. By it he won a place for himself in the newspaper world, and later, as a credit asset, had employed it successfully in negotiating for the Social Era. It taking over the publication of this sheet he had remarked that life was altogether too short to permit of attempting anything worth while; and so he forthwith made no further assaults upon fame—assuming that he had ever done so—but settled comfortably down to the enjoyment of his sinecure. He had never married. And as justification for his self-imposed celibacy he pompously quoted Kant: "I am a bachelor, and I could not cease to be a bachelor without a disturbance that would be intolerable to me." Yet he was not a misogynist. He simply shirked responsibility and ease-threatening risk.

"You see," he remarked, explaining himself later to Carmen, "I'm a pseudo-littérateur—I conduct a 'Who's It?' for the quidnuncs of this blasé old burg. And I really meet a need by furnishing an easy method of suicide, for my little vanity sheet is a sort of social mirror, that all who look therein may die of laughter. By the way, I had to run those base squibs about you; but, by George! I'm going to make a retraction in next Saturday's issue. I'll put a crimp in friend Ames that'll make him squeal. I'll say he has ten wives, and eight of 'em Zulus, at that!"

"Don't, please!" laughed Carmen. "We have enough to meet, without going out of our way to stir up more. Let it all work out now, as it will, in the right way."

"In the right way, eh? Is that part of your doctrine? Say, don't you think that in formulating a new religion you're carrying coals to Newcastle? Seems to me we've got enough now, if we'd practice 'em."

"My religion, Mr. Haynerd, is only the practice of the teachings of a Nazarene Jew, named Jesus," she replied gently.

"Well, my religion is Socialism, I guess," he said lightly.

"So's mine," she quickly returned. "I'm a thorough Socialist. So we meet on common ground, don't we?" She held out her hand, and he took it, a puzzled expression coming into his face.

"Well," he said, glancing about, "we'll have to dispute that later. I see Father Waite is about to open this little religious seminar. But we'll get back to the discussion of myself," he added, his eyes twinkling. "For, like Thoreau, I prefer to discuss that subject, because there's no other about which I know so much."

"Nor so little," she added, laughing and squeezing his hand as she turned from him.

The little coterie took their places around the dining room table, which was well strewn with books of reference and writing materials. Father Waite rapped gently for order. A deep, reverent silence fell upon the group. They had begun their search for God.

"Friends," began Father Waite slowly, "we are inaugurating to-night a mission of the most profound significance. No question so vitally touches the human race as the one which we shall reverently discuss in this and subsequent meetings. I thought as I came in here to-night of the wisdom of Epictitus, who said, 'What do I want? To acquaint myself with the true order of things and comply with it.' I am sure no statement so fully expresses our common desire as that."

"Just so!" interrupted Haynerd. "If Adam was a Baptist, I want to know and comply with the fact."

A general laugh followed. Then Father Waite held up a hand and again became serious.

"Can we treat lightly even the Adam story, when we consider how much misery and rancor its literal acceptance has caused among mankind? No. Out of deepest sympathy for a world in search of truth, let us pity their stumblings, and take heed that we fall not ourselves."

He paused. A hush lay upon the room. Carmen's hand stole toward the Beaubien's and clasped it tightly.

"In these days, as of old, it is still said, 'There is no God!' And yet, though the ignorant and wilful admit it not, mankind's very existence is a function of their concept of a Creator, a sole cause of all that is. No question, economic, social, political, or other, is so vitally related to humanity as this: 'Is there a God?' And the corollary: 'What is His relation to me?' For there can be nothing so important as a knowl-

edge of truth. Can the existence of a God be demonstrated? Can He be shown to be beneficent, in view of the world's testimony? What is our source of truth? If the Bible, then can its authenticity be established? The greatest of our so-called civilizations are known as Christian. But who can say by them what Christianity really is?"

"I am quite prepared to say what it is not!" again interrupted Haynerd.

"Doubtless," resumed Father Waite. "And so are we all. But at present we are seeking constructive criticism, not solely destructive. There has been quite enough of that sort in the world. But, to go a step further, can we say positively that the truth is to be found even in Christianity?"

"Please explain your question," said Miss Wall, with a puzzled look.

"The first essential is always facts," he continued. "The deduction of right conclusions will follow—provided, as Matthew Arnold so tersely said, we have sufficient delicacy of perception, subtlety, wisdom, and tact. And, I may add, sufficient freedom from prejudice and mental bias—ah, there is the stumbling block!"

"Matthew Arnold," ventured Haynerd, "was dubbed a first-class infidel, as I recall it."

"Doubtless. As have been many of the world's most earnest searchers. Yet he enunciated much truth, which we to-day are acknowledging. But, to resume, since Christianity as we know it is based upon the personality of a man, Jesus, we ask: Can the historicity of Jesus be established?"

"What! Do you mean: did he ever live?" queried Miss Wall in greater surprise than before.

"Yes. And if so, is he correctly reported in what we call the Gospels? Then, did he reveal the truth to his followers? And, lastly, has that truth been correctly transmitted to us?"

"And," added Hitt, "there is still the question: Assuming that he gave us the truth, can we apply it successfully to the meeting of our daily needs?"

"The point is well taken," replied Father Waite. "For, though I may know that there are very abstruse mathematical principles, yet I may be utterly unable to demonstrate or use them. But now," he went on, "we are brought to other vital questions concerning us. They are, I think, points to which the theologian has given but scant thought. If we conclude that there is a God, we are confronted with the material universe and man. Did He create them? And what are their natures and import?"

"Well!" ejaculated Haynerd. "Seems to me you've cut out

a large assignment for this little party. Those are questions that the world has played football with for thousands of years. Do you think we can settle them in a few evenings' study? I think I'll be excused!"

"No! We can't spare you," laughed Father Waite. Then he glanced at Carmen, who had sat quiet, apparently unhearing, during the remarks. "I think you will hear things soon that will set you thinking," he said. "But now we are going to let our traveled friend, Mr. Hitt, give us just a word in summation of his thought regarding the modern world and its attitude toward the questions which we have been propounding."

The explorer leaned back in his chair and assumed his customary attitude when in deep thought. All eyes turned upon him in eager expectation.

"The world," he began reflectively, "presents to me to-day the most interesting aspect it has assumed since history began. True, the age is one of great mental confusion. Quite as true, startling discoveries and astounding inventions have so upset our staid old mediaeval views that the world is hurriedly crowding them out, together with its God. Doctrines for which our fathers bled and burned are to-day lightly tossed upon the ash heap. The searchlight is turned never so mercilessly upon the founder of the Christian religion, and upon the manuscripts which relate his words and deeds. Yet most of us have grown so busy—I often wonder with what—that we have no time for that which can not be grasped as we run. We work desperately by day, building up the grandest material fabric the world has ever seen; and at night we repair the machine for the next day's run. Even our college professors bewail the lack of time for solid reading and research. And if our young pursue studies, it is with the almost exclusive thought of education as a means of earning a material livelihood later, and, if possible, rearing a mansion and stocking its larder and garage. It is, I repeat, a grandly materialistic age, wherein, to the casual observer, spirituality is at a very low ebb."

He thrust his long legs under the table and cast his eyes upward to the ceiling as he resumed:

"The modern world is still in its spiritual infancy, and does not often speak the name of God. Not that we are so much irreverent as that we feel no special need of Him in our daily pursuits. Since we ceased to tremble at the thunders of Sinai, and their lingering echoes in bulls and heresy condemnations, we find that we get along just as well—indeed, much better. And it really is quite bad form now to speak continually of God, or to refer to Him as anything real and vital. To be on

such terms of intimacy with Him as this girl Carmen is—in thought, at least—would be regarded to-day as evidence of sentimentalism and weakness."

He paused again, to marshal his thought and give his auditors an opportunity for comment. Then, as the silence remained unbroken, he continued:

"Viewing the world from one standpoint, it has achieved remarkable success in applying the knout to superstition and limitation. But, like a too energetic housekeeper, it has swept out much that is essential with the *débris*. When spirituality ceases to be real or vital to a people, then a grave danger threatens them. Materiality has never proved a blessing, as history shows. Life that is made up of strain and ceaseless worry is not life. The incessant accumulation of material wealth, when we do not know how really to enjoy it, is folly. To pamper the flesh, to the complete ignoring of the spirit, is suicide. The increased hankering after physical excitements and animal pleasures, to the utter abandonment of the search for that which is real and satisfying, is an exhibition of gross, mesmeric stupidity, to say the least. It shows that our sense of life is awry."

"But the world is surely attempting its own betterment," protested Haynerd.

"I grant you that," replied Hitt. "But legislation and coercion are the wrong means to employ. They restrain, but they do not cure. They are only narcotics."

"Oh, well, you are not going to change the race until the individual himself changes."

"Have I disputed that?" said Hitt. "Quite the contrary, that is the pith of my observations. Reform is a hearthside affair. And no sane man will maintain that general reform can ever come until the individual's needs are met—his daily, hourly, worldly needs."

"I think I get your point," said Father Waite. "It is wholly a question of man's concept of the cause of things, himself included, and their purpose and end, is it not?"

"Quite so," replied Hitt. "The restless spirit of the modern world is hourly voicing its discontent with a faltering faith which has no other basis than blind belief. It wants demonstrable fact upon which to build. In plain words, *mankind would be better if they but knew how!*"

"Well, we show them how," asserted Haynerd. "But they don't do as we tell 'em."

"Are you quite sure that you show them how?" asked Hitt. "What do you ever do toward showing them how permanently to eradicate a single human difficulty?"

"Oh, well, putting it that way, nothing, of course."

"Quite so, my friend. The relief we afford is but temporary. And so the world continues to wait for surcease from woe in a life beyond the grave. But now, returning to our survey, let me say that amid all the folly of vain pursuits, of wars and strife, of doleful living and pitiable dying, there are more encouraging and hopeful signs hung out to the inquiring thought to-day than ever before in history. If I misread not, we are already entered upon changes so tremendous that their end must be the revolutionizing of thought and conduct, and hence of life. Our present age is one of great extremes: though we touch the depths, we are aiming likewise at the heights. I doubt if there ever was a time when so many sensed the nothingness of the pleasures of the flesh. I doubt if ever there was such a quickening of the business conscience, and such a determined desire to introduce honesty and purity into our dealings with one another. Never was the need of religion more keenly felt by the world than it is to-day; and that is why mankind are willing to accept any religious belief, however eccentric, that comes in the guise of truth and bearing the promise of surcease from sin, sickness, and sorrow here this side of the grave. The world was never so hungry for religious truth; and this fact is a perpetual challenge to the Church. There is a tremendous world-yearning to know and to do better. And what is its cause? I answer, a growing appreciation of the idea that 'the kingdom of harmony is within you.'"

"Jesus said that," murmured Carmen, looking up.

"He but amplified and gave form to the great fact that there was an influence for better things always existent in the ancient Jews, that 'something not ourselves,' if you will, 'that makes for righteousness.' And he showed that that influence could be outwardly externalized in freedom from the ills which beset humanity."

"Very good," put in Haynerd. "And then, what?"

"That 'something not ourselves' is the germ of the true idea of God," answered Hitt.

"Which makes God—?"

"Wholly mental."

"Spirit?"

"Mind," offered Carmen.

"The terms are synonymous," said Hitt. "And now let me conclude with a final observation. Mankind's beliefs are in a whirl. Ecclesiasticism is dying. Orthodoxy and conservatism are hanging desperately to the world's flying skirts, but they will eventually drop off. No change in thought has been greater

than that concerning God. The absentee Lord who started the universe and then withdrew has gone to the scrap heap, with the ridiculous views of predestination and infant damnation. The idea of a God who at divers times interfered with His creation and temporarily set aside His own laws to convince puny man of His greatness, is likewise obsolescent. The world is slowly growing into a conception of a creator, of some kind, but at least mental, and universally present. Nay, more, available for all our problems and needs. And the end will be the adoption of that conception, enlarged and purified still further, and taken into the minutest affairs of our daily life—as this girl has done. The day of patient suffering in this world, under the spell of a promise of compensating reward in the heavenly future, has all but passed. We are gradually becoming conscious of the stupendous fact that the kingdom of all harmony, immortality, and good, is *right here within us*—and therefore can be naught but a consciousness of absolute good, perfectly attainable by humanity as the 'old man' of Paul is laid off, but not gained, necessarily, through what we call death."

The silence which followed was broken at length by Miss Wall. "And what constitutes the 'old man'?" she asked.

"Largely, I think," said Hitt, "the belief that matter is real."

"What?" exclaimed Haynerd, almost rising from his chair. "Matter, real?"

Hitt laughed. "I stand on my statement," he replied.

Father Waite rose slowly, as if lost in thought. "History shows," he said, meditatively, "that man's progress has been proportionate to his freedom from the limitation of ignorance and undemonstrable belief. And that freedom has come as man's concept of God has grown less and less material, and more and more spiritual. From the animal nature of the savage, to whom all is matter, down—or up—to the man of to-day, to whom mind is assuming ever greater ascendency, man's progress has been marked by a throwing off of limiting beliefs, theological or other, in material power and substance. The development of the least material forces, steam, electricity, the X-ray, has come only as the human mind has thrown off a portion of its hampering material beliefs. I am astounded when I think of it, and of its marvelous message to future generations! For, from the premise that the creator of all things is spirit, or mind, as you will, comes the corollary that the creation itself must of necessity be *mental.* And from this come such deductions as fairly make me tremble. Carmen has told me of the deductions which her tutor, the priest José, drew from the single premise that the universe is infinite in extent —a premise which I think we all will accept."

"There can be no question about it," said Hitt, nodding his head.

"Well," continued Father Waite, "that granted, we must likewise grant its creator to be infinite, must we not?"

"Certainly."

"And that puts the creator out of the matter-class entirely. The creator must be—"

"Mind," said Carmen, supplying the thought ever-present with her.

"I see no other conclusion," said Father Waite. "But, that granted, a flood of deductions pours in that sends human beliefs and reasoning helter-skelter. For an infinite mind would eventually disintegrate if it were not perfect in every part."

"Perhaps it is already disintegrating, and that's what causes the evil in the world," hazarded Haynerd.

"Utterly untenable, my friend," put in Hitt. "For, granted an infinite mind, we must grant the concomitant fact that such a mind is of very necessity omnipotent, as well as perfect. What, then, could ever cause disintegration in it?"

"You are right," resumed Father Waite. "And such a mind, of very necessity perfect, omnipotent, and, of course, ever-present, must likewise be eternal. For there would be nothing to contest its existence. Age, decay, and death would be unknown to it. And so would evil."

"And that," said Carmen, rising, "is my God."

Father Waite nodded significantly to the others, and sat down, leaving the girl facing them, her luminous eyes looking off into unfathomed distances, and her face aglow with spiritual light.

"My God is infinite Good, to whom evil is unknown," she said. "And good includes all that is real. It includes wisdom, intelligence, truth, life, and love—none of them material. How do I know? Oh, not by human reasoning, whereby you seek to establish the fact of His existence, but by proof, daily proof, and in the hours when the floods of suppositional evil have swept over me. You would rest your faith on your deductions. But, as Saint Gregory said, no merit lies in faith where human reason supplies the proof; and that you will all some day know. Yes, my God is Mind. And He ceaselessly expresses Himself in and through His ideas, which He is constantly revealing. And He is infinite in good. And these ideas express that goodness and infinitude, from the tiniest up to the idea of God himself. And that grandest idea is—man. Oh, no, not the men and women you think you see about you in your daily walk. No! no! They but counterfeit the divine. But the man that Jesus always saw back of every human concept.

That man is God's own idea of Himself. He is God's image and likeness. He is God's reflection. That is the man we shall all put on when we have obeyed Paul and put off the old man, its counterfeit."

"Then, Carmen," said Father Waite, "you believe all things to be mental?"

"Yes, everything—man himself—and matter."

"But, if God is mind, and infinite, He must include all things. Hence He must include this imperfect representation, called the physical man. Is it not so?"

"No," returned the girl emphatically. "Did not Jesus speak often of the one lie about his Father, God? The material man and the material universe are but parts of that lie. And a lie is always a supposition; not real. All evil is contained in that supposition—a supposition that there is power and life and substance apart from God."

"But who made the supposition?" queried Haynerd.

"A supposition is not made," replied Carmen quietly. "Its existence is suppositional."

"I don't quite get that," interposed Miss Wall, her brows knitting.

Carmen smiled down at the inquiring woman. "Listen," she said. "The creator of all things is mind. You admit that. But you would have that mind the creator of evil, also. Yet, your own reasoning has shown that, on the premise of mind as infinite, such mind must be forever whole, harmonious, perfect. The thoughts and ideas by which that mind expresses itself must be likewise pure and perfect. Then that creative mind can not create evil. For, a mind that creates evil must itself be evil. And, being infinite, such a mind must include the evil it creates. We would have, then, either a mind wholly evil, or one of mixed evil and good. In either case, that mind must then destroy itself. Am I not right?"

"Your reasoning is, certainly," admitted Miss Wall. "But, how to account for evil, when God is infinite good—"

"To account for it at all," replied Carmen, "would be to make it something real. Jesus would account for it only by classing it as a lie about God. Now God, as the creative mind, must likewise be truth, since He is perfection and harmony. Very well, a lie is always the opposite of truth. Evil is the direct opposite of good."

"Yes," said Father Waite, nodding his head as certain bright memories returned to him. "That is what you told me that day when I first talked with you. And it started a new line of thought."

"Is it strange that God should have a suppositional oppo-

site?" asked Carmen. "Has not everything with which you are concerned a suppositional opposite? God is truth. His suppositional opposite is the great lie of evil. God is good. Hence the same opposite. God is spirit. The suppositional opposite is matter. And matter is just as mental as the thoughts which you are now holding. God is real. Good is real. And so, evil and the lie are unreal."

"The distinction seems to me theoretical," protested Miss Wall.

Hitt then took the floor. "That word 'real,'" he said, "is perhaps what is causing your confusion. The real is that which, according to Spencer, does not pass away. We used to believe matter indestructible, forever permanent. We learn that our views regarding it were very incorrect. Matter is quite destructible."

"And yet," said Father Waite, "in this universe of constant change, *something* endures. What is it but the mind that is God, expressing itself in such immaterial and permanent things as law, love, life, power?"

"Exactly," replied Hitt. "But now we have been brought back again to the question of matter. If we can prove that matter is mental, and not real substance, we will have established Carmen's premise that everything is mental. Then there remains but the distinction between the mind that is God, and its suppositional opposite, as expressed in human existence. Let us conclude, therefore, that to-night we have established, at least as a working hypothesis, that, since a thing existing implies a creator; and since the existent universe, being infinite, demands an infinite creator; and since a creator can not be infinite without being at once mind, perfect, eternal, omnipotent, omniactive, and good, we are fully justified in assuming that the creator of all things still exists, and is infinite, ever-present mind. Further than that we are not prepared to go, until we have discussed the questions of matter and the physical universe and man. Let us leave those topics for a subsequent meeting. And now I suggest that we unite in asking Carmen to sing for us, to crown the unity that has marked this discussion with the harmony of her own beautiful voice."

A few moments later, about the small upright piano which the Beaubien had rented for Carmen, the little group sat in reverent silence, while the young girl sent out through the little room the harmonious expression of her own inner life, the life that had never left heaven for earth.

CHAPTER 3

WITH her exit from the *beau monde* and her entrance upon the broad stage of University life, Carmen seemed to have awakened from the lethargy which her abrupt transition from mediaeval Simití into the modern world had occasioned. The static struggle to hold her own against the rushing currents of materialism had turned at length in her favor. Her lamp had been kept alight. The lethal influences which rose about her like stupifying fumes in the courts of fashion had been lifted and swept away by the fresher and more invigorating breezes into which her bark had now been drawn.

She plunged into her new work joyously; yet not without a deeper comprehension of its meaning than that of her fellow-students. She knew that the University was but another stepping-stone, even as her social life had been; another series of calls and opportunities to "prove" her God to be immanent good. And she thankfully accepted its offerings. For she was keenly alive to the materialistic leadings of the "higher education," and she would stand as a living protest against them.

It had not taken her long to discover the impotence lying at the heart of so-called modern education. She had not been slow to mark the disappointment written upon the faces of many of her fellow-students, who had sought in vain a great awakening light in those sacred precincts of learning, but, their confidence betrayed, were now floundering in the devouring morass of materialism. To her keen insight the University stood revealed as the great panderer to this latest century's obsessing idea that the true function of education is expressed in the imparting of changing, human information and a training for the business of earning one's daily bread according to the infamous code of the world's carnal social system. The University did not meet the most urgent need of the race by equipping men to stand against the great crises of human experience. It did not teach men to lay aside the counterfeit man of material sense; but rather emphasized the world's belief in the reality of this man by minutely detailed courses in his mundane history and the manifestations of his pitiable ignorance in his wanton crimes and watery ambitions. To Carmen, God was the most insistent fact of creation. And mankind's existence could find its only justification in ceaseless, consecrated manifestation of His harmonious activity. True, the University vaguely recognized God as infinitely com-

petent. But in the same breath it confessed its utter ignorance of a demonstrable knowledge of Him, to know whom alone is life. True, these men of worldly learning prayed. But their hollow prayers bore no hope, for they knew not how to gain answers to them.

And yet the girl remained in her new environment, awaiting the call to "come up higher." And meantime she strove to gain daily a wider knowledge of the Christ-principle, and its application to the needs and problems of her fellow-men. Her business was the reflection of her Father's business. Other ambition she had none. The weak, transient, flighty, so-called intellectual life which she saw about her sent no call across the calm currents of her thought. Her education was religious in the strictest, deepest sense, for she was learning to know God.

Though the girl pursued her way quietly, unwilling that the notoriety which had been fastened upon her should mark her as an object of curiosity, yet her story soon spread among University circles, and the first semester was a scant two weeks old before her name had been debated in the numerous Sororities and Women's Clubs, and quietly dropped. Negro blood coursed in her veins; and the stigma of parental disgrace lay dark upon her. She lived with a woman of blackened reputation—a reputation which waxed no brighter under the casual, malicious comments of J. Wilton Ames, whose great financial strength had made him a Trustee of this institution of learning. If Carmen divined the comment that was passed concerning herself, she gave no indication. But Hitt and Father Waite knew that the girl had not found favor in the social and fraternal organizations of her mates; and they knew why.

"A curse upon such little minds!" mused Hitt, when he could no longer restrain himself. Then he called a student to his desk one day, at the conclusion of his lecture.

"Miss West," he said, "you are leader in the most prominent Sorority in the University. I want you to give Miss Carmen Ariza a bid."

The girl shook her head. "She is not desirable."

"But the charges against her are unfounded! They are flagrantly false!" stormed Hitt.

"Have you proof, Professor?" the girl asked, as she arched her brows.

"None definite. But—well, what if she were a negress? Hers is the most brilliant mind in the entire student-body!"

But, no. Race segregation is a divine tenet, scripturally justified. What though the girl's skin vied with the lilies and rosebuds? What though her hair was the brown of ripe

fields? Had not God Almighty decreed that the negro should remain a drawer of water? A hewer of wood? Had the Lord designed him the equal of the noble white, He would have bleached his face, and bridged his flat nose. Miss West was a Southerner. And the reference to her dark-skinned sisters caused a little *moue* of disgust, as she flatly declined to consider Carmen an eligible candidate for membership in her Society.

"Lord above!" ejaculated Hitt, who had been brooding over the incident as he walked home with Father Waite. "That toadying, sycophantic, wealth-worshiping Miss West can see no farther than the epidermis! If we could have maintained Carmen's reputation as an Inca princess, this same girl would have fawned at her feet, and begged to kiss the edge of her robe! And she would have used every art of cajolery to ingratiate herself into Carmen's favor, to catch the social crumbs that our girl might chance to drop!"

"There, there, Hitt," soothed Father Waite. "Have you any idea that Carmen is at all injured by Miss West's supercilious conduct?"

"Not in the least!" asseverated Hitt vigorously. "But it makes me so —!"

"There, check that! You're forgetting the girl's influence, aren't you?"

Hitt gulped his wrath down his long throat. "Waite," he blurted, "that girl's an angel! She isn't real!"

"Oh, yes, she is!" replied Father Waite. "She's so real that we don't understand her—so real that she has been totally misunderstood by the petty minds that have sought to crush her here in New York, that's all."

"But certainly she is unique—"

"Ah, yes; unique in that she goes about putting her arms around people and telling them that she loves them. Yes, that certainly *is* unique! And she is unique in that her purity and goodness hang about her like an exquisite aura, and make people instinctively turn and look after her as she passes. Unique in that in her sweet presence one seems to hear a strain of heavenly music vibrating on the air. So unique that the dawn, the nesting birds, the wild flowers, the daily sunset, fairly intoxicate her with ecstasy and make her life a lyric."

Hitt essayed to reply; but the words hung in his throat.

"Yes," continued Father Waite, "she is so unique that when the empty-headed, vain young Duke of Altern, learning that she had been thrown out of society because of the base rumor regarding her parentage, sent her a written statement to the effect that there was no engagement between them, and de-

manded that she sign it, she did so, with a happy smile, with an invocation, with a prayer for blessing upon those who had tried to ruin her."

"Good God! Did she do that?"

"Aye, she did. And when Mrs. Hawley-Crowles and Ames and Lafelle filched La Libertad from her, she would have given them the clothes on her back with it, if they had demanded them. Yes, she's unique—so unique that again and again I hear her murmur, as she looks off absently into space: 'If it is right that he should have a son, then I want it to be so.'"

"Referring to—that priest—José de Rincón?"

"Yes, doubtless. And time and again I have heard her say: 'God is light. Sight depends upon light. Therefore Anita's babe sees.' Old Rosendo's grandson, you know."

Hitt nodded. "Waite," he said earnestly, "she is simply illustrating what would happen to any of us if we threw ourselves wholly upon God's protecting care, and took our thoughts only from Him. That's why she can lose her home, her family, her reputation, that mine—everything—and still stand. *She does what we don't dare to do!*"

"She is a living illustration," replied Father Waite, "of the mighty fact that there is nothing so practical as *real* Christianity. I want you to tell Professor Cane that. He calls her 'the girl with the Utopian views,' because of her ingenuous replies in his sociological class. But I want you to show him that she is very far from being impractical."

"I'll do it," said Hitt emphatically. "I'll prove to Cane that her religion is not a visionary scheme for regulating a world inhabited only by perfect beings, but is a working principle for the every-day sinner to use in the solution of his daily problems. Moreover, Waite, she is a vivid illustration of the fact that when the individual improves, the nation does likewise. Do you get me?"

"I not only get you, but I stand as a proof of your statement," returned Father Waite gently.

Carmen, her thoughts above, though her feet trod the earth, came and went, glad and happy. The change in her mode of living from the supreme luxury of the Hawley-Crowles mansion to the common comforts of the home where now she dwelt so simply with the Beaubien, seemed not to have caused even a ripple in the full current of her joy. Her life was a symphony of thanksgiving; an antiphony, in which all Nature voiced its responses to her in a diapason, full, rich, and harmonious. Often that autumn she might have been seen standing among the tinted leaves on the college campus, and drinking in

their silent message. And then she might have been heard to exclaim, as she turned her rapt gaze beyond the venerable, vine-clad buildings: "Oh, I feel as if I just couldn't stand it, all this wealth of beauty, of love, of boundless good!" And yet she was alone, always alone. For her dark story had reared a hedge about her; the taboo rested upon her; and even in the crowded classrooms the schoolmates of her own sex looked askance and drew their skirts about them.

But if the students avoided her, the faculty did not. And those like Professor Cane, who had the opportunity and the ability to peer into the depths of the girl's soul, took an immediate and increasing interest in her. Often her own naïve manners broke down the bars of convention, and brought her enduring friendships among the men of learning. This was especially the case with Doctor Morton, Dean of the School of Surgery. Yielding to a harmless impulse of curiosity, the girl one afternoon had set out on a trip of exploration, and had chosen the Anatomy building to begin with. Many odd sights greeted her eager gaze as she peered into classrooms and exhibit cases; but she met with no one until she chanced to open the door of Doctor Morton's private laboratory, and found that eminent man bending over a human brain, which he was dissecting.

Carmen stopped, and stood hesitant. The doctor looked up, surprise written large upon his features as he noted his fair caller. "Well!" he said, laying down his work.

"Well!" returned Carmen. "That sounds like the Indian 'How?' doesn't it?" Then both laughed.

"You—are—Doctor Morton?" queried the girl, twisting around and looking at the name on the door to make certain.

"Yes," replied the genial doctor, with growing interest. He was a gray-haired, elderly man, slightly inclined to embonpoint, and with keen, twinkling eyes. "Will you come in?"

"Yes, indeed," returned the girl; "I'd love to. I am Carmen Ariza."

"Ah, yes. The young South American—lady. I have heard of you."

"Most everybody seems to have heard of me," sighed the girl. "Well, it doesn't make any difference about my coming in here, does it?" She looked up at him so wistfully that he felt a great tug at his heartstrings.

"Not a bit!" he replied cordially. "You're as welcome as the April sun."

She seized his hand and pressed it. "Now tell me," she said eagerly, looking about. "What are you doing? What's that thing?"

"That," said he, taking up the pulpy gray object, "is the brain of my erstwhile friend and collaborator, Doctor Bolton. He willed it to the University."

"Alas, poor Yorick!" murmured Carmen, a facetious twinkle coming into her eyes as she looked at it. "And why are you cutting it up?"

"In the interests of science," returned the man, studying her. "That we may increase our knowledge of this marvelous mechanism of thought, and the laws by which it operates in mental processes."

"Then you still blindly seek the living among the dead, don't you?" she murmured. "You think that this poor thing held life, and you search now among its ashes for the living principle. But, God is life; and 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' "

The man regarded her intently without replying. She bent for a while over the half-dissected brain in deep thought. Then she looked up.

"Doctor," she said, "life is not structural. God is life; and to know Him is to reflect life. Reflecting Him, we are immortal. Doctor, don't you think it is about time to do away with this business of dying?"

The man of science started visibly, and his eyes opened wider. The abrupt question quite swept him off his feet.

"You didn't really expect to find anything in this brain, did you?" she went on. "The brain is composed of—what?"

"Why, mostly water, with a few commonplace salts," he answered, wondering what the next question would be.

"And can a compound of water and a few commonplace salts *think?*" she asked, looking intently at him.

"N—no," he answered tentatively.

"The brain is not the cause of thought, then, but an effect, is it not?" she pursued.

"Why, really, my dear Miss Carmen, we don't know. We call it the organ of thought, because in some way thought seems to be associated with it, rather than with—well, with the liver, or muscles, for example. And we learn that certain classes of mental disturbances are intimately associated with lesions or clots in the brain. That's about all."

The girl reflected for a few moments. Then:

"Doctor, you wouldn't cut up a machine to discover the motive power, would you? But that is just what you are doing there with that brain. You are hoping by dissecting it to find the power that made it go, aren't you? And the power that made it go was mind—life."

"But the life is not in the brain now," hazarded the doctor.

"And never was," returned Carmen promptly. "You see," she went on, "if the brain was ever alive, it could never cease to be so. If it ever lived, it could never die. That brain never manifested real life. It manifested only a false sense of life. And that false sense died. Who or what says that the man who owned that brain is dead? Why, the human mind—human belief. It is the human mind, expressing its belief in death, and in a real opposite to life, or God. Don't you see?"

"H'm!" The doctor regarded the girl queerly. She returned his look with a confident smile.

"You believe in evolution, don't you?" she at length continued.

"Oh, surely," he replied unhesitatingly. "There is overwhelming evidence of it."

"Well, then, in the process of evolution, which was evolved first, the brain, or the mind which operates it and through it?" she asked.

"Why," he replied meditatively, "it is quite likely that they evolved simultaneously, the brain being the mind's organ of expression."

"But don't you see, Doctor, that you are now making the mind really come first? For that which expresses a thing is always secondary to the thing expressed."

"Well, perhaps so," he said. "At any rate, it is quite immaterial to a practical knowledge of how to meet the brain's ills. I am a practical man, you know."

"I'm sorry to hear that," she said simply. "Practical men are so stupid and ignorant."

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed, putting his hands on his hips and staring down at the smiling face.

"And you are so nice and friendly, I wouldn't want to think you stupid and ignorant," she went on blandly.

"H'm! Well, that kind o' takes the edge off your former classification of me," he said, greatly amused, yet wondering just what appraisal to place upon this frank girl.

"And evolution," she continued, "is an unfolding, isn't it? You see, the great fact of creation is the creator, infinite mind. Well, that mind expresses itself in its ideas. And these it is unfolding all the time. Now a fact always gives rise to a suppositional opposite. The opposite of a fact is an error. And that is why error has been called 'negative truth.' Of course, there isn't any such thing as negative truth! And so all error is simply falsity, supposition, without real existence. Do you see?"

He did not reply. But she went on unperturbed. "Now, the human, or carnal, mind is the negative truth of the real mind,

God. It is infinite mind's suppositional opposite. And it imitates the infinite mind, but in a very stupid, blundering way. And so the whole physical universe manifests evolution, too—an unfolding, or revealing, of material types, or mental concepts. And all these manifest the human mind's sense of life, and its equally strong sense of death. The universe, animals, men, are all human types, evolved, or unfolded, or revealed, in the human mind. And all are the human mind's interpretations of infinite mind's real and eternal and perfect ideas. You see that, don't you?

"You know," she laughed, "speaking of 'negative truth', the first chapter of Genesis sets forth positive truth, and the second chapter sets forth its opposite, negative truth. It is very odd, isn't it? But there it is for everybody to read. And the human mind, of course, true to its beliefs, clings to the second chapter as the reality. Isn't it strange?"

Meantime, Carmen's attention had been attracted to a large microscope that stood on the table near her. Going to it, she peeped curiously down into the tube. "Well, what have you here?" she inquired.

"Germs," he said mechanically.

"Germs! What funny, twisted things! Well," she suddenly asked, "have you got the fear germ here?"

He broke into a laugh. But when the girl looked up, her face was quite serious.

"You do not know it, Doctor, for you are a practical man, but you haven't anything but fear germs under this glass," she said in a low voice.

"Why, those are germs of typhoid and tuberculosis!" he exclaimed.

"And manifestations, externalizations, of the fear germ itself, which is mental," she added. "These things don't cause disease," she went on, pointing to the slide. "But the thoughts which they manifest do. Do you scientists know why people die, Doctor?"

"No," he admitted seriously. "We really do not know why people die."

"Then I'll tell you," she said. *"It's because they don't know enough to live.* This poor Doctor Bolton died because he didn't know that God was life. He committed sickness, and then paid the penalty, death. He sinned by believing that there were other powers than God, by believing that life and thought were in matter. And so he paid the wages of sin, death. He simply missed the mark, that's all."

She turned and perched herself upon the table. "You haven't asked me to sit down," she commented brightly. "But, if you don't mind, I will."

"I—I beg your pardon!" the doctor exclaimed, coloring, and hastily setting out a chair. "I really was so interested in what you were saying that I forgot my manners."

"No," she said, shaking her head as she declined the proffered chair, "I'll sit here, so's I can look straight into your eyes. You go ahead and cut up poor Yorick, and I'll talk."

The doctor laughed again. "You are much more interesting," he returned, "than poor Bolton, dead or alive. In fact, he really was quite a bore. But you are like a sparkling mountain rill, even if you do give me a severe classification."

"Well," she replied, "then you are honestly more interested in life than in death, are you?"

"Why, most assuredly!" he said.

"So am I, much! Death is *such* a mistake; and I haven't a bit of use for it," she continued. "It's like making mistakes in music, or mathematics. Now when we make mistakes in those, we never stop to discuss them. We correct them. But, dear me! The world has nearly talked its poor old head off about the mistakes of sickness and death. It never seems to occur to the world that Jesus always associated sickness with sin. You know, the Rabbis of his day seem to have hit upon a great truth, although they didn't make it really practical. They maintained that a sick man could not be healed of his diseases until all his sins had been forgiven. And so they attempted to forgive sins and make men clean by their elaborate ceremonies. But they missed the mark, too. And nobody got to the root of the difficulty until Jesus came. He forgave sin by destroying it completely. And that cured the disease that was the manifestation of sin. Now I ask, why do you, nearly two thousand years after his time, still do as the old Rabbis did, and continue to treat the body—the effect—instead of the mental cause? But," looking down in meditation, "I suppose if you did that the people would cry, 'He hath a devil!' They thought I was a witch in Simiti."

"H'm!" returned the doctor. "Then you do not believe that disease is caused by microbes, I take it?"

"Disease caused by microbes? Yes, so it is. And the microbe? It is a manifestation of the human mind again. And, as with typhoid fever, diphtheria, and other diseases, the human mind applies its own cherished, ignorant beliefs in certain methods, and then renders innocuous its own manifestations, microbes. The human mind makes its own diseases, and then in some cases removes the disease, but still by human, material methods. Its reliefs are only temporary. At last it yields itself to its false beliefs, and then goes out in what it calls death. It is all a mental process—all human thought and its various

manifestations. Now why not get beyond microbes and reach the cause, even of them, the human mind itself? Jesus did. Paul did. Others have done so. Why do not you men of science do likewise?"

Doctor Morton himself took the chair which he had set out for the girl. "What you say," he replied slowly, "is not new to me. But I can only answer that the world is not ready yet for the great change which you suggest."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "What cant! What mesmerism you are laboring under! Was the world ready for Jesus?"

"No. He came too soon. Events show that."

"Well, then, would he be accepted to-day, if he had not come before?"

"I can not say. But— I think he would not."

"And I quite agree with you," she said firmly. "Now the world has doctored for more than four thousand years, despite the fact that health is not sold in bottle or pill form. Doctor, what does the history of all these centuries of drugging show you?"

He hesitated. Carmen waited a moment; then continued:

"Don't they demonstrate the absolute inability of medicines to cure disease?" she asked. "Any more than putting men in prison cures crime?" she added as an afterthought.

"They at least prove that medication has not *permanently* removed disease," he ventured, not wishing to go too far.

"Doctor," she said earnestly, "that man Jesus, who, according to you, came too soon, said: 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Well, didn't he come very, very close to the truth when he made that statement? He did not say that without drugs or material remedies we could do nothing, but that without the Christ-principle mankind would continue, as before, to miss the mark. He showed that disease and discord result from sin. Sin is lack of righteousness, lack of right-thinking about things. It is wrong belief, false thought. Sin is mental. Its effect, disease, is mental—a state of discordant consciousness. Can you with drugs change a state of mind?"

"Certainly," he replied quickly. "Whiskey and opium cause changes in one's state of mind."

"No," she answered. "But the human belief of power inherent in whiskey and opium, or of the human body's reaction to them, causes a change in the human thought-activity that is called consciousness. The state of human consciousness changes with the belief, but not the real state of mind. Can you not see that? And Doctor Bolton—"

"Bolton was not sick. He died of natural causes, old age, and general breakdown," was the doctor's refuge.

Carmen laughed and sprang down from the table. "What an obstinately obdurate lot you scientific men are!" she exclaimed. "Don't you know that you doctors are only a development of the old 'medicine-man'? Now in the first place, Mr. Bolton isn't dead; and, in the second, there are no *natural* causes of death. Old age? Why, that's gone out of fashion, long since."

"You deny senile changes—?"

"I deny every human error!" she interrupted.

"Then," with a note of banter in his voice, "I take it that you do not expect to die."

"I do not!" she replied emphatically. "I expect good, nothing but good, ever! Don't you know that physiologists themselves admit that the human body is composed of eighty-five per cent water and fifteen per cent ordinary salts? Can such a combination have intelligence and sensation? Do you still believe that life is dependent upon lungs, stomach, or liver? Why, the so-called 'unit cell' breathes, digests, and manifests life-functions, and yet it has no lungs, no mouth, no stomach, no organs. It is the human mind, assuming knowledge and power which it does *not* possess, that says the sense of life shall depend upon such organs in the one case and not in the other. And the human mind could be utterly refuted if men would only learn to use the Christ-principle. Jesus and Paul used it, and proved material laws to be only false beliefs."

"Well," he replied meditatively, "if you are correct, then the preachers are way off the track. And I have long since come to the conclusion that—Well," changing abruptly back to the previous topic, "so you refute the microbe theory, eh?"

"I said I did and did not," she laughed. "Listen: fear, worry, hatred, malice, murder, all of which are mental things in themselves, manifest to the human mind as microbes. These are the hurtful microbes, and they produce toxins, which poison the system. What is the cure? Antitoxins? No, indeed! Jesus gave the real and permanent cure. It is the Christ-principle. Now you can learn that principle, and how to apply it. But if you don't care to, why, then you must go on with your material microbes and poisons, and with your diseases and death, until you are ready to leave them and turn to that which is real. For all human-mind activity and manifestation, whether in microbes, death, or life, is mental, and is but the counterfeit of the real activity of divine mind, God.

"Do you know," she pursued earnestly, "I heard a lecture the other day in which it was said that life is a sort of fermentation in the body. Well, as regards human life, I guess that is so. For the human body is only a manifestation of the human

mind; and the human mind surely is in a continuous state of ferment!"

She paused and laughed. "The lecturer," she continued, "said that the range of life was from ultra-microbe to man, and that Shakespeare began as a single cell. Think of it! The mundane concept of Shakespeare's body may have unfolded from a cell-concept; but Shakespeare was a manifestation of mind! And that mind was an interpretation, though very imperfect, of the mind that is God. Why can't you materialists raise your eyes above the dust? Why, you would choke the very avenues of the spirit with mud!"

"H'm! Well, your education seems to be—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "my education is beyond the vagaries that are so generally taught in the name of knowledge. Intellectual education is a farce. It does nothing for mankind, except to give them a false culture. Were the so-called great men of the past really educated? Here is an extract which I copied this afternoon from Hawthorne." She opened her note book and read:

"'Ah, but there is a half-acknowledged melancholy like to this when we stand in the perfected vigor of our life and feel that Time has now given us all his flowers, and that the next work of his never-idle fingers must be to steal them one by one away.'

"Now," she asked, "was that man really educated? In current theology, yes. But that theology *could not solve his least earthly problem, nor meet his slightest need!* Oh, what inexpressibly sad lives so many of your greatest men have lived! Your Hawthorne, your Longfellow, they yearned for the rest which they were taught was to follow death. They were the victims of false theology. They were mesmerized. If they believed in the Christ—and they thought they did—why, then, did they not rise up and do as he bade them do, put death out? He taught no such resignation to human beliefs as they practiced! He showed men how to overcome the world. Why do we not try to overcome it? Has the time not come? Is the world not sufficiently weary of dying?"

He looked at her intently for some moments. She seemed, as she stood there before him, like a thing of gossamer and sunshine that had drifted into his laboratory, despite the closed door.

"Say," he suddenly exclaimed, as a new thought struck him, "I'd like to have you talk with my friend, Reverend Patterson Moore! Pat and I have barked at each other for many years now, and I'm getting tired. I'd like to shift him to a younger and more vigorous opponent. I believe you've been providentially sent to relieve me."

"Well," she acquiesced. "You can tell Professor Hitt, and—"

"Hitt, eh? You know him?"

"Yes, indeed! He comes often to our house. He is very much interested in these things that you and I have been talking about to-day. We have regular meetings, with Father Waite, and Mr. Haynerd, and—"

"Well, no wonder you can argue! You've had practice, it seems. But—suppose I have Hitt bring me to one of your meetings, eh?"

"Do!" cried the girl. "And bring your Reverend Pat."

The genial doctor laughed long and incontinently. "I imagine Reverend Pat wouldn't thank you for referring to him that way," he said. "He is a very high Anglican, and his dignity is marvelous—to say nothing of his self-esteem. Well, we'll see, we'll see. But, don't go yet! We're just getting acquainted."

"I must," replied the girl. "I didn't really mean to come in here, you know. But I guess I was led, don't you?"

And when the door had closed upon her, the doctor sat silently beside the pulseless brain of his deceased comrade and pondered long.

* * * * * *

When Carmen entered the house, late that afternoon, she found the Beaubien in conversation with Professor Williams, of the University School of Music. That gentleman had learned through Hitt of the girl's unusual voice, and had dropped in on his way home to ask that he might hear and test it. With only a smile for reply, Carmen tossed her books and hat upon the sofa and went directly to the piano, where she launched into the weird Indian lament which had produced such an astounding effect upon her chance visitors at the Elwin school that day long gone, and which had been running in her thought and seeking expression ever since her conversation with Doctor Morton a short while before.

For a full half hour she sang, lost in the harmony that poured from her soul. Father Waite entered, and quietly took a seat. She did not see him. Song after song, most of them the characteristic soft melodies of her people, and many her own simple improvisations, issued from the absorbed girl's lips. The Beaubien rose and stole softly from the room. Father Waite sat with his head resting on his hand, striving to interpret the message which welled from the depths of his own being, where hidden, unused chords were vibrating in unison with those of this young girl.

Then, abruptly, the singing stopped, and Carmen turned and

faced her auditors. "There," she said, with a happy sigh, "that just *had* to come out!"

Professor Williams rose and took her hand. "Who, may I ask, was your teacher?" he said, in a voice husky with emotion.

Carmen smiled up at him. "No human teacher," she said gently.

A look of astonishment came into the man's face. He turned to Father Waite inquiringly. The latter nodded his confirmation of the girl's words.

"Well!" exclaimed the professor. "I wonder if you realize what you have got, Miss Carmen?"

"Yes," she replied simply. "It's a beautiful gift, isn't it?"

"But—I had thought of asking you to let me train you—but—I—I dare not undertake to handle such a voice as yours. May I—may I send Maitre Rossanni to you, the great Italian? Will you sing for him?"

"Oh, yes," returned the girl; "I'll sing for anybody. The gift isn't mine, you know. It is for all. I'm only the channel."

When the professor had taken his reluctant departure, the Beaubien returned and handed Carmen a letter. With a cry of joy the girl seized it and tore it open. It was from Colombia, the second one that her beloved Rosendo had succeeded in getting down the river to the distant coast. It had been written three months prior, and it bore many stains and evidences of the vicissitudes through which it had emerged. Yes, Rosendo and his family were well, though still at Maria Rosa, far up the Boque, with Don Nicolás. The war raged below them, but they were safe.

"And not a word from Padre José, or about him," murmured the girl, sinking into a chair and clasping the soiled letter to her breast.

Father Waite thought of the little newsboy of Cartagena, and his possible share in the cause of José's silence. But he made no comment.

CHAPTER 4

CARMEN'S first serious test of her knowledge of English composition was made early in the semester, in an essay on town life in Colombia; and so meritorious did her instructor consider it that he advised her to send it to a prominent literary magazine. The result was that the essay was accepted, and a request made for further contributions.

The girl bubbled with new-found happiness. Then she wrote another, and still another article on the life and customs

of her people. Both were given publication; and with the money which she received for them she bought a silk dress for Jude, much to that adoring woman's surprise and vehement protest. Carmen might have saved the money toward a piano—but, no; that would have been thinking of herself, and was inadmissible. Nor did the Beaubien offer any objection. "Indeed," commented that fond shepherd of this lone lamb, "she would have poured the money out into somebody's open hand anyway, and it might as well be Jude's."

Then she choked back the tears as she added: "The girl comes home every night with an empty purse, no matter how full it may have been in the morning. What does she do with the money? Follow her some day and see."

Carmen's slight success in the field of letters still further aroused Haynerd's interest. The peacefully somnolent Social Era, he thought, might awaken to new things under the stimulus of such fresh writing as hers. Perhaps life did hold something of real value after all. Would she furnish him with a column or two on the peculiar social aspect of the metropolis?

She would, and did. And the result was that the staid conservative sheet was given a smart shaking; and several prominent society people sat up and blinked. The article was in no way malicious. It was not even condemnatory. It but threw a clear light from a somewhat unusual angle upon certain phases of New York's social life, and uncovered a few of the more subtly hidden springs of its peculiar activity.

Among those who read her essay in the Social Era was J. Wilton Ames. He first lay back in his chair and laughed uproariously. And then, when his agents discovered for him the identity of the author, he glowered. The Beaubien was still standing between him and this budding genius. And though he might, and would, ultimately ruin the Beaubien financially, yet this girl, despite her social ostracism, bade fair to earn with her facile pen enough to maintain them both in luxury. So he bent anew to his vengeful schemes, for he would make them come to him. As Trustee, he would learn what courses the girl was pursuing in the University—for he had long known that she was in attendance there. Then he would learn who her associates were; what suggestions and advice her instructors gave her; and her plans for the future. And he would trace her sources of income and apply pressure at the most vital point. He had never in his life been successfully balked. Much less by a woman.

Then Haynerd came to congratulate Carmen again, and to request that she attend with him the formal opening of the new Ames mansion, the great Fifth Avenue palace, for he

wanted her vivid, first-hand impressions for his account of the brilliant affair in the Social Era. As reporters, he explained, they would of necessity remain in seclusion, and the girl might disguise to such an extent as to prevent recognition, if she chose. It was business for him, and an opportunity for rich experience for her. And the fearless girl went, because it would help Haynerd, though the Beaubien inwardly trembled.

Invitations to the number of three hundred had been issued to the *élite* of New York, announcing the formal opening of the newly finished, magnificent Ames dwelling. These invitations were wrought in enamel on cards of pure gold. Each had cost thirty dollars. The mansion itself, twelve millions. A month prior to the opening, the newspapers had printed carefully-worded announcements of the return of Mrs. J. Wilton Ames and her daughter, after a protracted stay at various foreign baths and rest-cures in the hope of restoring the former's impaired health. But Mrs. Ames now felt that she could no longer deprive society of her needed activities, and so had returned to conduct it through what promised to be a season of unusual brilliancy. The papers did not, however, state that J. Wilton had himself recalled her, after quietly destroying his bill of divorce, because he recognized the necessity of maintaining the social side of his complicated existence on a par with his vast business affairs.

As Carmen and Haynerd approached the huge, white marble structure, cupolaed, gabled, buttressed, and pinnacled, an overwhelming sense of what it stood for suddenly came upon the girl, and she saw revealed in a flash that side of its owner's life which for so many months she had been pondering. The great shadows that seemed to issue from the massive exterior of the building swept out and engulfed her; and she turned and clasped Haynerd's arm with the feeling that she would suffocate were she to remain longer in them.

"Perk up, little one," said Haynerd, taking her hand. "We'll go round to the rear entrance, and I will present my business card there. Ames's secretary telephoned me instructions, and I said I was going to bring a lady reporter with me."

Carmen caught her breath as she passed through the tall, exquisitely wrought iron gateway and along the marble walk which led to the rear. Up the winding steps to the front entrance, where swung the marvelous bronze doors which had stirred the imaginations of two continents, streamed the favored of the fashionable world. Among them Carmen saw many whom she recognized. The buffoon, Larry Beers, was there, swinging jauntily along with the bejeweled wife of Samson, the multimillionaire packer. Kane and his wife, and

Weston followed. Outside the gates there was incessant chugging of automobiles, mingled with the shouted orders of the three policemen detailed to direct the traffic. A pinched, ragged urchin and his tattered little sister crept up and peered wildly through the iron pickets of the fence; but a sharp rap from a policeman's club sent them scattering. Carmen stood for a moment in the shadows and watched the swarm mount the marble steps and enter through those wonderful doors. There were congressmen and senators, magnates and jurists, distillers and preachers. Each one owed his tithe of allegiance to Ames. Some were chained to him hard and fast, nor would break their bonds this side of the grave. Some he owned outright. There were those who grew white under his most casual glance. There were others who knew that his calloused hand was closing about them, and that when it opened again they would fall to the ground, dry as dust. Others, like moths, not yet singed, were hovering ever closer to the bright, cruel flame. Reverend Darius Borwell, bowing and smiling, alighted from his parochial car and tripped blithely up the glistening marble steps. Each and all, wrapping the skeleton of grief, greed, shame, or fear beneath swart broadcloth and shimmering silk, floated up those ghostly steps as if drawn by a tremendous magnet incarnate in the person of J. Wilton Ames.

Carmen shuddered and turned away. Did the pale wraith of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles sigh in the wake of that gilded assembly? Did the moans of poor, grief-stricken Mrs. Gannette, sitting in her poverty and sorrow, die into silence against those bronze doors? Was he, the being who dwelt in that marble palace, the hydra-headed embodiment of the carnal, Scriptural, age-old power that opposes God? And could he stand forever?

Two detectives met them at the rear door. How many others there were scattered through the house itself, Haynerd could only guess. But he passed inspection and was admitted with the girl. A butler took immediate charge of them, and led them quickly through a short passage and to an elevator, by which they mounted to another floor, where, opening a paneled oak door, the dignified functionary preceded them into a small reception hall, with lavatories at either end. Here he bade them remove their wraps and await his return.

"Well," commented Haynerd, with a light, nervous laugh, "we've crossed the Rubicon! Now don't miss a thing!"

A moment later the butler returned with a sharp-eyed young woman, Mrs. Ames's social secretary.

"You will be very careful in your report," the latter began at once in a business-like manner. "And you will submit the

same to me for approval before it is published in your magazine. Mr. Ames deems that imperative, since your recent publication of an essay on modern society in this city. I have a list here of the guests, their business and social standing, and other data. You will run that in full. You will say that this is the most brilliant assemblage ever gathered under one roof in New York. The wealth represented here to-night will total not less than three billion dollars. The jewels alone displayed will foot up not less than twenty millions. Now, let me see," again consulting her notes.

Haynerd stole a covert glance at Carmen and winked.

"The chef," the secretary resumed, "was brought over from Paris by Mrs. Ames on her recent return. His name, Pierre Lotard, descendant of the famous chef of the Emperor Napoleon First. He considers that his menu to-night surpasses anything he ever before achieved."

"May I ask," interrupted Haynerd, "the probable cost of the supper?"

"Yes, perhaps you had better mention that item. It will be in the neighborhood of three hundred dollars a plate. House and table decorations, about eight thousand dollars. Here is a copy of the menu. Run it in full. The menu cards were hand-illuminated by Parisian artists, and each bears a sketch illustrative or suggestive of the guest to whom it is given."

"Cost?" queried Haynerd off-handedly.

"Three thousand, if I correctly recall it," was the nonchalant reply. "As to the viands, you will mention that they have been gathered from every part of the world. Now come with me, and I will give you a hasty sketch of the house, while the guests are assembling in the grand salon. Then you will remain in the balcony, where you will make what notes you wish on the dress displayed. Refreshments will be served to you later in this waiting room. I need not remind you that you are not expected to mingle with the guests, nor to address any one. Keep to the balcony, and quite out of view."

Opening a door opposite the one through which she had entered, the young woman led her charges directly out upon the great marble balcony overlooking the grand salon below. A rush of brilliant light engulfed them, and a potpourri of chatter and laughter, mingled with soft music from a distant organ, and the less distinct notes of the orchestra in the still more distant ballroom, rose about them in confused babel, as they tiptoed to the exquisitely carved marble railing and peered down upon the gorgeous pageant. The ceiling rose far above them, delicately tinted like a soft Italian sky. The lofty walls dropped, like gold-gray veils, to the richly carved paneled

wainscoting beneath, which had once lined the halls of a mediaeval castle on the Rhine. The great windows were hidden behind rare Venetian lace curtains, over which fell hangings of brocade, repeating the soft tints of the wall and the brocade-covered chairs and divans ranged close about the sides of the splendid room. On the floor lay a massive, priceless Persian carpet, dating from the fifteenth century.

Haynerd drew a long breath, and whistled softly. From the end of the salon he could mark the short flight of steps which led to the mezzanine, with its walls heavily tapestried, and broken by rich oak doors opening into lavatories and lounging rooms, itself widening at the far end into the grand billiard and smoking parlors, done off in Circassian walnut, with tables and furniture to harmonize. From the mezzanine he saw the grand stairway falling away in great, sweeping curves, all in blended marble from the world's greatest quarries, and delicately chased and carved into classic designs. Two tapestries, centuries old, hung from the walls on either side. Far above, the oak ceiling, for which the *Schwarzwald* had been ranged, was overlaid with pure gold leaf. The whole was suffused with the glow of myriad hidden and inverted lights, reflected in a thousand angles from burnished gold and marble and rarest gems.

Haynerd turned to the waiting secretary. He groped in the chambers of his imagery for some superlative adjective to express his emotion before this colossal display of wealth. But his ample vocabulary had faded quite. He could only shake his head and give vent to the inept remark, "Swell—by George!"

The secretary, without replying, motioned them to follow. Passing noiselessly around the balcony to the opposite side, she indicated a door below, leading off to the right from the grand salon.

"That room beyond," she said, "is the petit salon. The decorative effects are by French artists. Beyond that is the morning room. It is in panels from French chateaux, covered with Gobelin tapestry. Now from here you can see a bit of the music room. The grand organ cost, installed, about two hundred thousand dollars. It is electrically controlled, with its pipes running all around the room, so as to give the effect of music coming from every corner."

Haynerd again softly whistled.

"There are three art galleries beyond, two for paintings, and one for sculpture. Mr. Ames has without doubt the finest art collection in America. It includes several Titians, Veroneses, da Vincis, Turners, three Rubens, and two Raphaels. By the way, it may interest you to know that his negotiations for the

Murillo Madonna were completed to-day, and the picture will be sent to him immediately."

"Might I ask what he paid for it?" Haynerd inquired casually.

"You may say that he paid something over three hundred thousand dollars for it," she replied, in a quite matter of fact tone. "Now," she continued, "you will go back to your first position, near the door of the waiting room, and remain there until I return. I may have an opportunity later to show you the library. It is very unique. Great carved stone fireplace, taken from a Scotch castle. Hundreds of rare volumes and first editions. Now, if any one approaches, you can step behind the screen and remain out of view. You have chairs and a table there for your writing. Do not in any event leave this balcony."

With this final injunction she turned and disappeared into the little waiting room from which they had emerged.

For some moments Carmen and Haynerd stood looking alternately at each other and about them at their magnificent environment. Both had seen much of the gilded life, and the girl had dwelt some months in its alien atmosphere. But neither had ever witnessed such a stupendous display of material wealth as was here unfolded before their astonished gaze. At the head of the grand stairway stood the Ames trio, to receive their resplendent guests. The women were magnificently gowned. But Ames's massive form in its simple black and chaste linen was the cynosure of all eyes. Even Haynerd could not suppress a note of admiration as he gazed at the splendid figure.

"And yet," he murmured, "a victim, like the rest, of the great delusion."

Carmen laid down the opera glasses through which she had been studying the man. "He is an expression," she said, "of the American ideal—the ideal of practical material life. It is toward his plane of life that this country's youth are struggling, at, oh, what a cost! Think, think, what his immense, misused revenue could do, if unselfishly used! Why, the cost of this single night's show would put two hundred men like Father Waite through a four-year course in the University, and train them to do life's work! And what, what will Mr. Ames get out of it?"

"Oh, further opportunities to increase his pile, I suppose," returned Haynerd, shrugging his shoulders.

"But, will he get real happiness? Peace? Joy? And does he need further opportunities to accumulate money? Does he not rather need some one to show him the meaning of life, how to really live?"

"He does, indeed! And it may be your mission, Carmen, to do just that. But if you don't, then I sincerely hope the man may die before he discovers that all that he has achieved, his wealth, his prestige, his power, have not been worth striving for!"

"He hasn't the slightest idea of the meaning of life," she murmured, looking down upon the glittering throng. "Nor have any of them."

"No," he replied. "They put me in mind of Carlyle's famous remark, as he stood looking out across the London Strand: 'There are in this city some four million people, mostly fools.' How mean, narrow and hard their lives are! These are the high priests of vested privilege, of mediaevalism, of old institutions whose perpetual maintenance, even in a generation that has progressed far beyond them, is a fungus blight upon us. Ah, there's little Willie Van Wot, all dolled out! He's glorifying his Creator now by devoting his foolish little existence to coaching trips along the New England shore. He reminds me of the Fleet street poet who wrote a century ago of the similar occupation of a young dandy of that day—

> What can little T. O. do?
> Why, drive a Phaeton and Two! ! !
> Can little T. O. do no more?
> Yes, drive a Phaeton and Four! ! ! !

He's an interesting outgrowth of our unique social system, eh?"

"We must follow Emerson and treat them all as we do pictures, look at them in the best light," murmured Carmen.

"Aye, hang them in the best light!" returned Haynerd. "But make sure they're well hung! There goes the pseudo-princess, member of the royal house of England. She carries the royal taint, too. I tell you, under the splash and glitter you can see the feet of clay, eh?"

"Yes," smiled Carmen, "resting upon the high heel."

"Huh!" muttered Haynerd, with a gesture of disgust. "The women of fashion seem to feel that the Creator didn't do a good job when He designed the feminine sex—that He should have put a hump where the heel is, so's to slant the foot and make comfortable walking impossible, as well as to insure a plentiful crop of foot-troubles and deformities. The Chinese women used to manifest a similarly insane thought. Good heavens! High heel, low brain! The human mind is a cave of black ignorance!"

Carmen did not reply, but bent her attention again to the throng below.

"Look there," said Haynerd, indicating a stout, full-toiletted woman, resplendent with diamonds. "That's our

eminent French guest, Madam Carot. She severed herself from her tiresome consort last year by means of a bichloride tablet deftly immersed in his coffee, and then, leaving a sigh of regret hovering over his unhandsome remains, hastened to our friendly shores, to grace the *beau monde* with her gowns and jewels."

Carmen turned to him with a remonstrance of incredulity.

"Fact," he stubbornly insisted. "The Social Era got the whole spicy story. And there beside her is our indispensable Mrs. T. Oliver Pennymon. See, she's drifted up to young Watson! Coquetting for a husband still, the old buzzard!"

"Mr. Haynerd!"

"Well, it's fact, anyway," persisted the society monitor. "And there beyond her is fat little Mrs. Stuffenheimer, with her two unlovely, red-faced daughters. Ah, the despairing mamma is still vainly angling for mates for her two chubby Venuses! If they're not married off properly and into good social positions soon, it's mamma for the scrap heap! By George! it's positively tragic to see these anxious mothers at Newport and Atlantic City and other fashionable places, rushing madly hither and yon with their marriageable daughters, dragging them from one function to another in the wild hope that they may ultimately land a man. Worry and pain dig deep furrows into poor mamma's face if she sees her daughters fading into the has-been class. It requires heroism, I say, to travel in society! But I guess you know, eh? Well," taking up his notebook, "we must get busy now. By the way, how's your shorthand progressing?"

"Oh, splendidly," replied the girl, her eyes still upon the massive figure of Ames. Then, recovering from her abstraction, "I can write as fast in it now as in longhand."

"Good!" said Haynerd. "You'll need it later."

For more than an hour the two sat in the seclusion of the splendid balcony, looking down upon the scene of magnificence below. Through the mind of the young girl ran a ceaseless paean of thanksgiving for her timely deliverance from the trammels which she so well knew enshackled these glittering birds of paradise. With it mingled a great, consuming desire, a soul-longing to pour into the vacuity of high society the leaven of her own pure thought. In particular did her boundless love now go out to that gigantic figure whose ideals of life this sumptuous display of material wealth and power expressed. Why was he doing this? What ulterior motive had he? Was it only a vainglorious exhibition of his own human prowess? Was it an announcement, magnificent beyond compare, that he, J. Wilton Ames, had attained the supreme

heights of gratified world ambition? That the world at last lay at his feet? And that over it brooded the giant's lament that there remained nothing more to conquer? But, if so, the girl at least knew that the man's herculean efforts to subdue the material world were as nothing. The real conquest lay still before him, the conquest of self. And when that were faced and achieved, well she knew that no such garish display as this would announce the victory to a breathless world.

The bustling little social secretary again appeared, and briefly announced the production of an opera in the auditorium, to which she had come to conduct them. Passing through the little waiting room and to the elevator, they quickly mounted to the unoccupied gallery of the theater above. The parquet, which would seat nearly a thousand spectators, was rapidly filling with an eager, curious throng. The Ames trio and some of the more distinguished guests were already occupying the gorgeously decorated boxes at the sides. An orchestra of fifty pieces was visible in the hollow below the stage. Caroni, the famous grand opera leader, stood ready to conduct. The opera itself was the much discussed music drama, Salome.

"Now," commented Haynerd to his fair, wondering companion, who was lost in contemplation of the magnificent mural decorations of the little theater, "we will see something rare, for this opera has been called the most artistic piece of indecency known to the stage. Good heavens! Ames has got Marie Deschamps for the title rôle. She'll cost him not less than five thousand dollars for this one night. And—see here," drawing Carmen's attention to the bill, "Marcou and Corvalle besides! The man must be made of money! These stars get three thousand dollars a night during the regular season."

Every phase of sophistication was manifested in that glittering audience when the curtain rose and the sensational theme was introduced. But to none came thoughts like those which clamored for admittance at the portals of Carmen's mentality. In the bold challenge of the insanely sensual portrayal of a carnal mind the girl saw the age-old defiance of the spirit by the flesh. In the rolls of the wondrous music, in its shrieks, its pleadings, and its dying echoes, she heard voiced again the soul-lament of a weary world searching vainly in the mazes of human thought for truth. As the wonderful Deschamps danced weirdly before her in the ghastly light and fell gloating over her gory trophy, Carmen saw but the frantic struggles of a diseased soul, portrayed as the skilled surgeon lays bare the malignant growth that is eating the quivering tissues of a human frame. The immodesty of dress, the sensual

suggestiveness of the dance, the brutal flouting of every element of refinement and delicacy, blazoned in frenzied tone and movement the bloody orgy and dance of death which goes on incessantly upon the stage of human life, and ends in the mad whirl and confusion and insane gibbering over the lifeless trophies for which mankind sell their very souls.

"About the limit of tolerance, eh?" commented Haynerd, when the final curtain dropped. "Yes, even to a vitiated taste. The passionate thirst for the sensational has led to this sickening display of salacity—"

"Splendid, wasn't it?" came in tones of admiration from the social secretary, who had returned to conduct her charges back to the balcony before the guests emerged from the theater. "You will run the program in full, and comment at some length on the expense attached," she went on. "You have just witnessed the private production of a full opera, unabridged, and with the regular operatic cast. Supper will follow in a half hour. Meantime, you will remain in the balcony where you were before."

Returning to their former position, Carmen sank into a chair at the little table behind the screen, and strove to orient her thought. Haynerd sat down beside her to arrange his voluminous notes. Presently footsteps were heard, and the sound of voices. Haynerd glanced through the hinge of the screen. "Ha!" he whispered, "here comes Ames and—who's with him? Ah, Representative Wales. Showing him about, I suppose."

Carmen gazed at the approaching men with fascinated eyes, although she saw but one, the towering magician who had reared this fairy palace. She saw Ames lead his companion to the door of the little waiting room at their right, and heard the congressman protest against entering.

"But we can talk undisturbed in here," urged Ames, his hand on the door.

"Better remain out here on the balcony," replied the congressman nervously, as he moved toward the railing.

Ames laughed and shrugged his enormous shoulders. He understood the man's repugnance fully. But he humored him.

"You know, Wales," he said easily, going to the railing and peering over at the brilliant assemblage below, "if I could get the heathen Chinee to add an extra half-inch to his shirt length, I'd make a hundred millions. And then, perhaps, I wouldn't need to struggle with your Ways and Means Committee as I do. By the way, the cotton schedule will be reported out unchanged, I presume." He turned and looked quizzically at his companion as he said this.

Wales trembled slightly when he replied to the question he had been awaiting. "I think not, Mr. Ames."

The giant's face clouded. "Parsons will vote for it," he said suggestively. "What will you do?"

The congressman hesitated. "I—the party, Mr. Ames, is committed to the high tariff principle. We can not let in a flood of foreign cotton—"

"Then you want the fight between the farmers and spinners to continue, eh?" interposed Ames cynically. "You don't seem to realize that in the end both will get more money than they are getting now, and that it will come from the consumer, who will pay vastly higher for his finished products, in addition to the tariff. Do you get me?"

"It is a party principle, Mr. Ames," returned the congressman tenaciously.

"Look here, Wales," said Ames, turning savagely upon his companion. "The cotton farmers are organizing. They have got to be stopped. Their coöperative associations must be smashed. The tariff schedule which you have before your Committee will do it. And you are going to pass it."

"Mr. Ames," replied the congressman, "I—I am opposed to the constant manipulation of cotton by you rich men. I—"

"There," interrupted Ames, "never mind explaining your conscientious scruples. What I want to know is, do you intend to cast your vote for the unaltered schedule?"

"N—no, Mr. Ames, I can't—"

"H'm," murmured Ames. Then, with easy nonchalance, turning to an apparently irrelevant topic as he gazed over the railing, "I heard just before coming from my office this evening that the doors of the Mercantile Trust would not open tomorrow. Too bad! A lot of my personal friends are heavily involved. Bank's been shaky for some time. Ames and Company will take over their tangible assets. I believe you were interested, were you not?" He glanced at the trembling man out of the corners of his eyes.

Wales turned ashen. His hands shook as he grasped the railing before him and tried to steady himself.

"Hits you pretty hard, eh?" coolly queried Ames.

"It—it—yes—very hard," murmured the dazed man. "Are you—positive?"

"Quite. But step into the waiting room and 'phone the newspapers. They will corroborate my statements."

Representative Wales was serving his first term in Congress. His election had been a matter of surprise to everybody, himself included, excepting Ames. Wales knew not that his detailed personal history had been for many months carefully filed in the vaults of the Ames tower. Nor did he ever suspect that his candidacy and election had been matters of most care-

ful thought on the part of the great financier and his political associates. But when he, a stranger to congressional halls, was made a member of the Ways and Means Committee, his astonishment overleaped all bounds. Then Ames had smiled his own gratification, and arranged that the new member should attend the formal opening of the great Ames palace later in the year. Meantime, the financier and the new congressman had met on several occasions, and the latter had felt no little pride in the attention which the great man had shown him.

And so the path to fame had unrolled steadily before the guileless Wales until this night, when the first suspicions of his thraldom had penetrated and darkened his thought. Then, like a crash from a clear sky, had come the announcement of the Mercantile Trust failure. And as he stood there now, clutching the marble railing, his thought busy with the woman and the two fair children who would be rendered penniless by this blow, the fell presence of the monster Ames seemed to bend over him as the epitome of ruthless, brutal, inhuman cunning.

"How much are you likely to lose by this failure?" the giant asked.

Wales collected his scattered senses. "Not less than fifty thousand dollars," he replied in a husky voice.

"H'm!" commented Ames. "Too bad! too bad! Well, let's go below. Ha! what's this?" stooping and apparently taking up an object that had been lying on the floor back of the congressman. "Well! well! your bank book, Wales. Must have slipped from your pocket."

Wales took the book in a dazed, mechanical way. "Why—I have no—this is not mine," he murmured, gazing alternately at the pass book and at Ames.

"Your name's on it, at least," commented Ames laconically. "And the book's been issued by our bank, Ames and Company. Guess you've forgotten opening an account there, let me see, yes, a week ago." He took the book and opened it. "Ah, yes, I recall the incident now. There's your deposit, made last Friday."

Wales choked. What did it mean? The book, made out in his name on Ames and Company, showed a deposit to his credit of fifty thousand dollars!

Ames slipped his arm through the confused congressman's, and started with him down the balcony. "You see," he said, as they moved away, "the Mercantile failure will not hit you as hard as you thought. Now, about that cotton schedule, when you cast your vote for it, be sure that—" The voice died away

as the men disappeared in the distance, leaving Carmen and Haynerd staring blankly at each other.

"Well!" ejaculated Haynerd at length. "What now?"

"We must save them both," said Carmen quietly.

"I could make my everlasting fortune out of this!" exclaimed Haynerd excitedly.

"And lose your soul," replied the girl. "But I will see Mr. Ames, and tell him that we overheard his conversation. He will save us all."

Haynerd then smiled, but it was a hard smile, coming from one who knew the world. "Listen, my dear girl," he said, "we will keep quiet, you and I. To mention this would be only to court disaster at the hands of one who would strangle us at the slightest intimation of our knowledge. Can you not see the consequences to us?"

"I can see but the right," returned Carmen determinedly. "And the right shall prevail!"

"But, my dear girl," cried Haynerd, now thoroughly alarmed both for himself and her, "he would ruin us! This is no affair of ours. We had no intention of hearing; and so let it be as if we had not heard."

"And let the lie of evil prevail? No, Mr. Haynerd, I could not, if I would. Mr. Ames is being used by evil; and it is making him a channel to ruin Mr. Wales. Shall I stand idly by and permit it? No!"

She rose, with a look of fixed resolution on her face. Haynerd sprang to his feet and laid a detaining hand upon her arm. As he did so, the screen was quickly drawn aside, and Kathleen Ames and two of her young companions bent their curious gaze in upon them. Absorbed in their earnest conversation, Carmen and Haynerd had not heard the approach of the young ladies, who were on a tour of inspection of the house before supper.

"Reporters for the Social Era, Miss Ames," explained Haynerd, hastily answering the unspoken question, while he made a courteous bow.

But Kathleen had not heard him. "What—you!" she cried, instantly recognizing Carmen, and drawing back. "How dared you! Oh!"

"What is it, dear?" asked one of the young ladies, as her eyes roved over Carmen's tense, motionless figure.

"You—creature!" cried Kathleen, spurting her venom at Carmen, while her eyes snapped angrily and her hands twitched. "When the front door is closed against you, you sneak in through the back door! Leave this house, instantly, or I shall have you thrown into the street!"

"Why, Kathleen dear!" exclaimed one of her companions. "She is only a reporter!"

"She is a low, negro wench!" cried Kathleen maliciously. "She comes from a brothel! She foisted herself upon society, and was discovered and kicked out! Her father is a dirty negro priest, and her mother a low—"

Haynerd rushed to the maddened girl and clapped his hand over her mouth. "Hush, for God's sake, Miss Ames!" Then, to her companions, "Take her away!" he pleaded. "And we will leave at once!"

But a house detective, attracted by the loud conversation, had come up and interposed. At his signal another one approached. "Bring Mr. Ames," he quietly commanded. "I can not put them out if they have his permission to remain," he explained to the angry Kathleen.

In a few moments, during which the little group stood tense and quiet, Ames himself appeared.

"Well?" he demanded. "Ah!" as his eyes lighted upon Carmen. "My little girl! And—so this is your assistant?" turning inquiringly to Haynerd. "By George! Her article in last week's Social Era was a corker. But," staring from Kathleen to the others, "what's the row?"

"I want that creature put out of the house!" demanded Kathleen, trembling with rage and pointing to Carmen.

"Tut, tut," returned Ames easily. "She's on business, and has my permission to remain. But, by George! that's a good joke," winking at Haynerd and breaking into a loud laugh. "You put one over on us there, old man!" he said.

"Father!" Scalding tears of anger and humiliation were streaming down Kathleen's face. "If she remains, I shall go—I shall leave the house—I will not stay under the same roof with the lewd creature!"

"Very well, then, run along," said Ames, taking the humiliated Kathleen by the shoulders and turning her about. "I will settle this without your assistance." Then he motioned to the house detectives to depart, and turned to Haynerd and Carmen. "Come in here," he said, leading the way to the little waiting room, and opening the door.

"Lord! but you belong down stairs with the rest," he ejaculated as he faced Carmen, standing before him pale but unafraid. "There isn't one down there who is in your class!" he exclaimed, placing his hands upon her shoulders and looking down into her beautiful face. "And," he continued with sudden determination, "I am going to take you down, and you will sit at the table with me, as my special guest!"

A sudden fear gripped Haynerd, and he started to interpose. But Carmen spoke first.

"Very well, Mr. Ames," she said quietly. "Take me down. I have a question to ask Mr. Wales when we are at the table."

An expression of surprise and inquiry came into Ames's face. "Mr. Wales?" he said wonderingly. "You mean Congressman—"

Then he stopped abruptly, and looked searchingly at Carmen and her companion. Haynerd paled. Carmen stood unflinching. Ames's expression of surprise gave place to one dark and menacing.

"You were behind that screen when Congressman Wales and I—"

"Yes," returned Carmen calmly. "I overheard all you said. I saw you bribe him."

Ames stood like a huge, black cloud, glowering down upon the slender girl. She looked up at him and smiled.

"You are going to tell him that the fifty thousand dollars are just a loan, and that he may vote as he chooses, aren't you?" she said. "You will not ruin his life, and the lives of his wife and babies, will you? You would never be happy, you know, if you did." Her voice was as quiet as the morning breeze.

"So!" the giant sneered. "You come into my house to play spy, eh? And if I had not caught you when I did you would have written another interesting article for the Social Era, wouldn't you? By God! I'll break you, Haynerd, and your infernal sheet into a million pieces if you dare print any such rot as this! And as for you, young lady—"

"You can do nothing to me, Mr. Ames; and you don't really want to," said Carmen quickly. "My reputation, you know—that is, the one which you people have given me—is just as black as it could be, isn't it? So that is safe." She laughed lightly.

Then she became very serious again. "It doesn't really make any difference to you, Mr. Ames," she said, "whether the cotton schedule is passed or not. You still have your millions—oh, so much more than you will ever know what to do with! But Mr. Wales, he has his wife and his babies and his good reputation—would you rob him of those priceless treasures, just to make a few dollars more for yourself?—dollars that you can't spend, and that you won't let others have?"

During the girl's quiet talk Ames was regaining his self-control. When she concluded he turned to Haynerd. "Miss Carmen can step out into the balcony. You and I will arrange this matter together," he said.

Carmen moved toward the door.

"Now," said Ames significantly, and in a low voice, "what's your price?"

Instantly the girl turned back and threw herself between

the two men. "He is not for sale!" she cried, her eyes flashing as she confronted Ames.

"Then, by God!" shouted Ames, who had lost himself completely, "I will crush him like a dirty spider! And you, I'll drag you through the gutters and make your name a synonym of all that is vile in womanhood!"

Carmen stepped quietly to the elevator and pressed the signal button.

"You shall not leave this house!" cried the enraged Ames, starting toward her. "Or you'll go under arrest!"

The girl drew herself up with splendid dignity, and faced him fearlessly. "We *shall* leave your house, and now, Mr. Ames!" she said. "You and that for which you stand can not touch us! The carnal mind is back of you! Omnipotent God is with us!"

She moved away from him, then turned and stood for a moment, flashing, sparkling, radiant with a power which he could not comprehend. "You know not what you do. You are blinded and deceived by human lust and greed. But the god you so ignorantly worship now will some day totter and fall upon you. Then you will awake, and you will see your present life as a horrid dream."

The elevator appeared. Carmen and the dazed Haynerd stepped quickly into it and descended without opposition to the lower floor. A few moments later they were again in the street and hurrying to the nearest car line.

"Girlie," said Haynerd, mopping the perspiration from his brow, "we're in for it now—and I shall be crushed! But you—I think your God will save you."

Carmen took his hand. "His arm is not shortened," she murmured, "that He can not save us both."

CHAPTER 5

ON the Monday morning following the Ames reception the society columns of the daily papers still teemed with extravagant depictions of the magnificent affair. On that same morning, while Haynerd sat gloomily in the office of the Social Era, meditating on his giant adversary's probable first move, Carmen, leaving her studies and classes, sought out an unpretentious home in one of the suburbs of the city, and for an hour or more talked earnestly with the timid, frightened little wife of Congressman Wales. Then, her work done, she dismissed the whole affair from her mind, and hastened joy-

ously back to the University. She would have gone to see Ames himself. "But," she reflected, as she dwelt on his conduct and words of the previous Saturday evening, "he is not ready for it yet. And when he is, I will go to him. And Kathleen—well, I will help her by seeing only the real child of God, which was hidden that night by the veil of hatred and jealousy. And that veil, after all, is but a shadow."

That evening the little group of searchers after God assembled again in the peaceful precincts of the Beaubien cottage. It was their third meeting, and they had come together reverently to pursue the most momentous inquiry that has ever stimulated human thought.

Haynerd and Carmen had said little relative to the Ames reception; but the former, still brooding over the certain consequences of his brush with Ames, was dejected and distraught. Carmen, leaning upon her sustaining thought, and conceding no mite of power or intelligence to evil, glowed like a radiant star.

"What are you listening to?" she asked of Haynerd, drawing him to one side. "Are you giving ear to the voices of evil, or good? Which are you making real to yourself? For those thoughts which are real to you will become outwardly manifested, you know."

"Bah! He's got us—tight!" muttered Haynerd, with a gesture signifying defeat. "And the insults of that arrogant daughter of his—"

"She did not insult me," said Carmen quickly. "She could not, for she doesn't know me. She merely denounced her concept of me, and not my real self. She vilified what she thought was Carmen Ariza; but it was only her own thought of me that she insulted. Can't you see? And such a concept of me as she holds deserves denouncing, doesn't it?"

"Well, what are we going to do?" he pursued testily.

"We are going to know," she whispered, "that we two with God constitute an overwhelming majority." She said nothing about her visit to the Wales home that morning, but pressed his hand, and then went to take her place at the table, where Father Waite was already rapping for order.

"My friends," began that earnest young man, looking lovingly about at the little group, "as we are gathered here we symbolize that analytical, critical endeavor of the unbiased human mind to discover the essence of religion. Religion is that which binds us to absolute truth, and so is truth itself. If there is a God, we believe from our former investigations that He must be universal mind. This belief carries with it as necessary corollaries the beliefs that He must be perfect, eternal,

and self-existent. The question, Who made God? must then receive its sufficient answer in the staggering statement that He has always existed, unchanged and unchangeable."

A sigh from Haynerd announced that quizzical soul's struggle to grasp a statement at once so radical and stupendous.

"True," continued Father Waite, addressing himself to his doubting friend, "the acceptance as fact of what we have deduced in our previous meetings must render the God of orthodox theology quite obsolete. But, as a compensation, it gives to us the most enlarged and beautiful concept of Him that we have ever had. It ennobles, broadens, purifies, and elevates our idea of Him. It destroys forever our belittling view of Him as but a magnified human character, full of wrath and caprice and angry threats, and delighting in human ceremonial and religious thaumaturgy. And, most practical of all for us, it renders the age-long problem of evil amenable to solution."

Just then came a ring at the front door; and a moment later the Beaubien ushered Doctor Morton into the room. All rose and hastened to welcome him.

"I—I am sure," began the visitor, looking at Carmen, "that I am not intruding, for I really come on invitation, you know. Miss Carmen, first; and then, our good friend Hitt, who told me this afternoon that you would probably meet this evening. I—I pondered the matter some little time—ah, but—well, to make it short, I couldn't keep away from a gathering so absolutely unique as this—I really couldn't."

Carmen seized both his hands. "My!" she exclaimed, her eyes dancing, "I am glad you came."

"And I, too," interposed Haynerd dryly, "for now we have two theological Philistines. I was feeling a bit lonely."

"Ah, my friend," replied the doctor, "I am simply an advocate of religious freedom, not a—"

"And religious freedom, as our wise Bill Nye once said, is but the art of giving intolerance a little more room, eh?" returned Haynerd with a laugh.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "You are a Philistine," he said. "I am a human interrogation."

Carmen took the doctor by the arm and led him to a place beside her at the table. "You—you didn't bring poor Yorick?" she whispered, with a glint of mischief in her bright eyes.

"No," laughed the genial visitor, "he's a dead one, you told me."

"Yes," replied the girl, "awfully dead! He is an outward manifestation of dead human beliefs, isn't he? But now listen, Father Waite is going to speak."

After a brief explanation to the doctor of the purpose of

the meeting, and a short *résumé* of their previous deductions, Father Waite continued the exposition of his subject.

"The physical universe," he said, "is to human beings a reality. And yet, according to Spencer's definition of reality, we must admit that the universe as we see it is quite unreal. For the real is that which endures."

"And you mean to say that the universe will not endure?" queried Haynerd abruptly.

"I do," replied Father Waite. "The phenomena of the universe, even as we see it, are in a state of ceaseless change. Birth, growth, maturity, decay, and death seems to be the law for all things material. There is perpetual genesis, and perpetual exodus."

"But," again urged Haynerd, "matter itself remains, is indestructible."

"Not so," said Father Waite. "Our friend, Doctor Morton, will corroborate my statement, I am sure."

The doctor nodded. "It is quite true," he said in reply. "And as revolutionary as true. The discovery, in the past few years, of the tremendously important fact that matter disintegrates and actually disappears, has revolutionized all physical science and rendered the world's text books obsolete."

"And matter actually disappears?" echoed Miss Wall incredulously.

"Absolutely!" interposed Hitt. "The radium atom, we find, lasts some seventeen hundred years, or a trifle longer. What becomes of it when it is destroyed? We can only say that it disappears from human consciousness."

"And so you reason that the whole material universe will ultimately disappear from the human consciousness?"

"Yes," returned Hitt, "I feel certain of it. Let us consider of what the universe consists. For many months I have been pondering this topic incessantly. I find that I can agree, in a measure, with those scientists who regard the physical universe as composed of only a few elementary constituents, namely, matter, energy, space, and time—"

"Each one of these elements is mental," interrupted Carmen.

"Exactly!" replied Hitt. "And the physical universe, even from the human standpoint, is, therefore, wholly mental."

"Well, but we see it!" ejaculated Haynerd. "And we feel and hear it! And I'm sure we smell it!"

Hitt laughed. "Do we?" he asked.

"No," interposed Father Waite; "we see only our mental concept of a universe, for seeing is wholly a mental process. Our comprehension of anything is entirely mental."

"But now," resumed Hitt, "to get back to the supposed reality of the physical universe, let us examine its constituents. First, let us consider its unity established by the harmonious interplay of the forces permeating it. This great fact is what led Herbert Spencer to conclude that the universe could have but one creator, one ruler, and that polytheism was untenable."

"We are quite agreed regarding that," said Father Waite. "If the Creator is mind, He is of very necessity infinite and omnipotent; hence there can be but one Creator."

"Very well," continued Hitt. "Now as to time. Is it material or tangible? Would it exist, but as a convenience for the human mind? Is it not really a creation of that mind? And, lastly, is it not merely a mental concept?"

"Our consciousness of time," replied Carmen, "is only our awareness of a continuous series of mental states."

"That classifies it exactly," said Hitt, "and renders it wholly mental. And now as to space," he resumed. "We are accustomed to say, loosely, that space is that in which we see things about us. But in what does the process of seeing consist? I say, I see a chair. What I really mean is that I am conscious of a chair. The process of seeing, we are told, is this: light, coming from the chair, enters the eye and casts an image of the chair upon the retina, much as a picture is thrown upon the ground glass of a camera. Then, in some way, the little rods and cones—the branching tips of the optic nerve which project from the retina—are set in motion by the light-waves. This vibration is in some mysterious manner carried along the optic nerve to a center in the brain, and—well, then the mind becomes cognizant of the chair out there, that's all."

They sat silent for some moments. Then Miss Wall spoke. "Do you mean to say," she queried, "that, after thousands of years of thought and investigation, mankind now know nothing more than that about the process of seeing?"

"I do," returned Hitt. "I confess it in all humility."

"Then all I've got to say," put in Haynerd, "is that the most remarkable thing about you learned men is your ignorance!"

The doctor smiled. "I find it is only the fool who is cocksure," he replied.

"Now," said Hitt, resuming the conversation, "let us go a step further and inquire, first, What is light? since the process of seeing is absolutely dependent upon it."

"Light," offered the doctor, "is vibrations, or wave-motion, so physicists tell us."

"Just so," resumed Hitt. "Light, we say, consists of vibrations. Not vibrations of anything tangible or definitely mate-

rial, but—well, just vibrations in the abstract. It is vibratory or wave motion. Now let us concede that these vibrations in some way get to the brain center; and then let us ask, Is the mind there, in the brain, awaiting the arrival of these vibrations to inform it that there is a chair outside?"

Haynerd indulged in a cynical laugh.

"It is too serious for laughter, my friend," said Hitt. "For to such crude beliefs as this we may attribute all the miseries of mankind."

"How is that?" queried Miss Wall in surprise.

"Simply because these beliefs constitute the general belief in a universe of matter without and about us. As a plain statement of fact, *there is no such thing.* But, I ask again, Is the mind within the brain, waiting for vibrations that will give it information concerning the external world? Or does the mind, from some focal point without the brain, look first at these vibrations, and then translate them into terms of things without? Do these vibrations in some way suggest form and color and substance to the waiting mind? Does the mind first look at vibrating nerve-points, and then form its own opinions regarding material objects? Does anything material enter the eye?"

"No," admitted the doctor; "unless we believe that vibrations *per se* are material."

"Now I ask, Is the mind reduced to such slavery that it must depend upon vibrations for its knowledge of an outside world?" continued Hitt. "And vibrations of minute pieces of flesh, at that! Flesh that will some day decay and leave the mind helpless!"

"Absurd!" exclaimed Haynerd. "Why doesn't the mind look directly at the chair, instead of getting its knowledge of the chair through vibrations of bits of meat? Or isn't there any chair out there to look at?"

"There!" exclaimed Hitt. "Now you've put your mental finger upon it. And now we are ready to nail to the cross of ignominy one of the crudest, most insensate beliefs of the human race. *The human mind gets nothing whatsoever from vibrations, from the human, fleshly eye, nor from any one of the five so-called physical senses!* The physical sense-testimony which mankind believe they receive from the eyes, the ears, and the other sense organs, can, even at best, consist only of a lot of disconnected, unintelligible vibrations; and anything that the mind may infer from such vibrations is inferred *without any outside authority whatsoever!*"

"Well!" ejaculated Miss Wall and Haynerd in a breath.

"And, further," continued Hitt, "we are forced to admit

that all that the mind knows is the contents of itself, of its own consciousness, and nothing more. Then, instead of seeing, hearing, and feeling real material objects outside of ourselves, we are in reality seeing, hearing, and feeling our own mental concepts of things—in other words, *our own thoughts of things!*"

A deep silence lay for some moments over the little group at the conclusion of Hitt's words. Then Doctor Morton nodded his acquiescence in the deduction. "And that," he said, "effectually disposes of the question of space."

"There is no space, Doctor," replied Hitt. "Space is likewise a mental concept. The human mind sees, hears, and feels nothing but its own thoughts. These it posits within itself with reference to one another, and calls the process 'seeing material objects in space.' The mind as little needs a space in which to see things as in which to dream them. I repeat, we do not see external things, or things outside of ourselves. We see always and only the thoughts that are within our own mentalities. Everything is within."

"That's why," murmured Carmen, "Jesus said, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you.'"

"Exactly!" said Hitt. "Did he not call evil, and all that originates in matter, the lie about God? And a lie is wholly mental. I tell you, the existence of a world outside of ourselves, an objective world composed of matter, is wholly inferred—it is mental visualizing—and it is unreal, for it is not based upon fact, upon truth!"

"Then," queried Haynerd, "our supposed 'outer world' is but our collection of thought-concepts which we hold within us, within our own consciousness, eh?"

"Yes."

"But—the question of God?"

"We are ready for that again," replied Hitt. "We have said that in the physical universe all is in a state of incessant change. Since the physical universe is but a mental concept to each one of us, we must admit that, were the concept based upon truth, it would not change. Our concept of the universe must be without the real causative and sustaining principle of all reality, else would it not pass away. And yet, beneath and behind all these changes, *something* endures. What is it? Matter? No. There is an enduring substance, invisible to human sight, but felt and known through its own influence. Is it law? Yes. Mind? Yes. Ideas? Yes. But none of these things is in any sense material. The material is the fleeting, human concept, composed of thought that is *not* based upon reality. These other things, wholly mental, or spiritual, if you

prefer, are based upon that 'something' which does endure, and which I will call the Causative Principle. It is the Universal Mind. It is what you loosely call God."

"Then did God make matter?" persisted Haynerd.

"I think," interposed Doctor Morton at this juncture, "that I can throw some light upon the immaterial character of matter, if I may so put it; for even our physical reasoning throws it entirely into the realm of the mental."

"Good!" exclaimed Hitt. "Let us hear from you, Doctor."

The doctor sat for some moments in a deep study. Then he began:

"The constitution of matter, speaking now from an admittedly materialistic standpoint, that of the physical sciences, is a subject of vastest interest and importance to mankind, for human existence *is* material.

"The ultimate constituent of matter has been called the atom. But we have said little when we have said that. The atom was once defined as a particle of matter so minute as to admit of no further division. That definition has gone to the rubbish heap, for the atom can now be torn to pieces. But—and here is the revolutionary fact in modern physical science —*it is no longer held necessary that matter should consist of material particles!* In fact, the great potential discovery of our day is that matter is electrical in composition, that it is composed of what are called 'electrons,' and that these electrons are themselves composed of electric charges. But what is an electric charge? Is it matter? No, not as we know matter. Is it even material? We can not say that it is. It is without weight, bulk, dimensions, or tangibility. Well, then, it comes dangerously near being a mental thing, known to the human mind solely by its manifestations, does it not? And of course our comprehension of it is entirely mental, as is our comprehension of everything."

He paused for a moment, that his words might be fully grasped. Then he went on:

"Now these atoms, whatever they are, are supposed to join together to form molecules. What brings them together thus? Affinity, we are told. And what is affinity? Why, it is—well, law, if you please. And law? A mental thing, we must admit. Very good. Then, going a step further, molecules are held together by cohesion to form material objects, chairs, trees, coal, and the like. But what is cohesion? Is it glue? Cement? Ah, no! Again, it is law. And law is mental."

"But, Doctor—" interrupted Haynerd.

The doctor held up a detaining hand. "Let me finish," he said. "Now we have the very latest word from our physical

scientists regarding the constitution of matter: *it is composed of electric charges, held together by law.* Again, you may justly ask: Is matter material—or mental?"

He paused again, and took up a book that lay before him.

"Here," he continued, "I hold a solid, material, lumpy thing, composed, you will say, of matter. And yet, in essence, and if we can believe our scientists, this book is composed of billions of electric charges—invisible things, without form, without weight, without color, without extension, held together by law, and making up a material object which has mass, color, weight, and extension. From millions of things which are invisible and have no size, we get an object, visible and extended."

"It's absurd!" exclaimed Miss Wall.

"Granted," interposed Hitt. "Yet, the doctor is giving the very latest deductions of the great scientists."

"But, Doctor," said Father Waite, "the scientists tell us that they have experimental evidence in support of the theories which you have stated regarding the composition of matter. Electricity has been proven granular, or atomic, in structure. And every electrical charge consists of an exact number of electrical atoms spread out over the surface of the charged body. All this admits of definite calculation."

"Admitted," said Hitt, taking up the challenge. "And their very calculations and deductions are rapidly wearing away the 'materialistic theory' of matter. You will admit that mathematics is wholly confined to the realm of mind. It is a strictly mental science, in no way material. It loses definiteness when 'practically' applied to material objects. Kant saw this, and declared that a science might be regarded as further removed from or nearer to perfection in proportion to the amount of mathematics it contained. Now there has been an astonishing confirmation of this great truth just lately. At a banquet given in honor of the discoverer of wireless telegraphy it was stated that the laws governing the traversing of space by the invisible electric waves were more exact than the general laws of physics, where very complex formulas and coefficients are required for correcting the general laws, due to surrounding material conditions. The greater exactness of laws governing the invisible electric waves was said to be due to the absence of matter. And it was further stated that *whenever matter had to be taken into consideration there could be no exact law of action!*"

"Which shows—?"

"That matter admits of no definite laws," replied Hitt. "That there are no real laws of matter. And that definiteness is attained only as we dematerialize matter itself."

"In other words, get into the realm of the mental?"

"Just so. And now for the application. I have said that we do not receive any testimony whatsoever through the so-called material senses, but that we see, hear, feel, taste, and smell our own thoughts—that is, the thoughts which, from some source, come into our mentalities. Very well, our scientists show us that, as they get farther away from dense material thoughts, and deal more and more with those which have less material structure, less material composition, their laws become more definite, more exact. Following this out to its ultimate conclusion, we may say, then, that *only those laws which have to do with the non-material are perfect.*"

"And those," said Carmen, "are the laws of mind."

"Exactly! And now the history of physical science shows that there has been a constant deviation from the old so-called fixed 'laws of matter.' The law of impenetrability has had to go. A great physicist tells us that, when dealing with sufficiently high speeds, matter has no such property as impenetrability. Mass is a function of velocity. The law of indestructibility has had to go. Matter deteriorates and goes to pieces. The material elements are not fixed. The decided tendency of belief is toward a single element, of which all matter is composed, and of which the eighty-odd constituent elements of matter accepted to-day are but modifications. That unit element may be the ether, of course. And the great Russian chemist, Mendeleef, so believed. But to us, the ether is a mental thing, a theory. But, granting its existence, *its universal penetrability renders matter, as we know it, non-existent.* Everything reduces to the ether, in the final analysis. And all energy becomes vibrations in and of the ether."

"And the ether," supplemented the doctor, "has to be without mass, invisible, tasteless, intangible, much more rigid than steel, and at the same time some six hundred billion times lighter than air, in order to fulfill all the requirements made of it and to meet all conditions."

"Yes; and yet the ether is a very necessary theory, if we are going to continue to explain the phenomena of force on a material basis."

"But if we abandon that basis—?"

"Then," said Carmen, "matter reduces to what it really is, the human mind's *interpretation* of substance."

"Yes," said Hitt, turning to her; "I think you are right; matter is the way real substance—let us say, spirit—looks to the human mentality. It is the way the human mind interprets its ideas of spirit. In other words, the human mind looks at the material thoughts and ideas which enter it, and calls

them solid substance, occupying space—calls them matter, with definite laws, and, in certain forms, containing life and intelligence."

"Aye, that is it!" said Father Waite. "And that has been the terrible mistake of the ages, the one great error, the one lie, that has caused us all to miss the mark and come short, far short, of the glory of the mind that is God. *There is the origin of the problem of evil!*"

"Undoubtedly," replied Hitt. "For evil is in essence but evil thought. And evil thought is invariably associated with matter. The origin of all evil is matter itself. And matter, we find, is but a mental concept, a thing of thought. Oh, the irony of it!"

"Well," put in Haynerd, who had been twitching nervously in his chair, "let's get to the conclusion of this very learned discussion. I'm a plain man, and I'd like to know just where we've landed. What have you said that I can take home with me? The earth still revolves around the sun, even if it is a mean mud ball. And I can't see that I can get along with less than three square meals a day."

"We have arrived," replied Hitt gravely, "at a most momentous conclusion, deduced by the physical scientists themselves, namely, that *things are not what they seem.* In other words, all things material seem to reduce to vibrations in and of the ether; the basis of all materiality is energy, motion, activity—mental things. All the elements of matter seem to be but modifications of one all-pervading element. That element is probably the ether, often called the 'mother of matter.' The elements, such as carbon, silicon, and the others, are not elementary at all, but are forms of one universal element, the ether. Hence, atoms are not atoms. The so-called rare elements are rare only because their lives are short. They disintegrate rapidly and change into other forms of the universal element—or disappear. 'Atoms are but fleeting phases of matter,' we are told. They are by no means eternal, even though they may endure for millions of years."

"Y-e-s?" commented Haynerd with a yawn.

"A great scientist of our own day," Hitt continued, "has said that 'the ether is so modified as to constitute matter, in some way.' What does that mean? Simply that 'visible matter and invisible ether are one and the same thing.' But to the five so-called physical senses the ether is utterly incomprehensible. So, then, matter is wholly incomprehensible to the five physical senses. What is it, then, that we call matter? It can be nothing more than the human mind's interpretation of its idea of an all-pervading, omnipresent *something*, a something which represents substance to it."

"Let me add a further quotation from the great physical scientist to whom you have referred," said the doctor. "He has said that the ether is *not* matter, but that it is material. And further, that we can not deny that the ether may have some mental and spiritual functions to subserve in some other order of existence, as matter has in this. It is wholly unrelated to any of our senses. The sense of sight takes cognizance of it, but only in a very indirect and not easily recognized way. And yet—stupendous conclusion!—*without the ether there could be no material universe at all!*"

"In other words," said Hitt, "the whole fabric of the material universe depends upon something utterly unrecognizable by the five physical senses."

"Exactly!" replied the doctor.

"Then," concluded Hitt, "the physical senses give us no information whatsoever of a real physical universe about us."

"And so," added Father Waite, "we come back to Carmen's statement, namely, that seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling are mental processes, in no way dependent upon the outer fleshly organs of sense—"

"Nonsense!" interjected Haynerd. "Why is it, then, that if the eyes are destroyed we do not see?"

"Simply, my friend, because of human belief," replied Hitt. "The human mind has been trained for untold centuries to dependence upon beliefs in the reality of matter, and beliefs in its dependence upon material modes for sight, hearing, touch, and so on. It is because of its erroneous beliefs that the human mind is to-day enslaved by matter, and dependent upon it for its very sense of existence. The human mind has made its sense of sight dependent upon a frail, pulpy bit of flesh, the eye. As long as that fleshly organ remains intact, the human mind sees its sense of sight externalized in the positing of its mental concepts about it as natural objects. But let that fleshly eye be destroyed, and the human mind sees its belief of dependence upon the material eye externalized as blindness. When the fleshly eye is gone the mind declares that it can no longer see. And what it declares as truth, as fact, becomes externalized to it. I repeat, the human mind sees and hears only its thoughts, its beliefs. And holding to these beliefs, and making them real to itself, it eventually sees them externalized in what it calls its outer world, its environment, its universe. And yet, the materialistic scientists themselves show that the human mind can take no cognizance whatever through the five physical senses of the all-pervading basis of its very existence, the ether. And the ether—alas! it is but a theory which we find necessary for any intelligible explanation of the farce of human existence on a material basis."

"Now see here!" retorted Haynerd, rising and giving expression to his protest by means of emphatic gestures. "I'm getting mixed—badly! You tell me that the existence of things demands a creator, and I admit it, for there can be no effect without a cause. Then you say that the universe is infinite; and I admit that, too, for the science of astronomy finds no limits to space, and no space unoccupied. You say that the unity manifested in the universe proves that there can be but one creator. Moreover, to create an infinite universe there must needs be an omnipotent creator; and there can be but one who is omnipotent. I cordially agree. Further, I can see how that creator must be mind—infinite mind. And I can see why that mind must be absolutely perfect, with no intelligence of evil whatsoever, else would it be a house divided against itself. And such a house must eventually fall. Now I admit that the universe must be the manifestation, the expression, of that infinite creative mind. But—and here's the sticking point—the universe is both good and evil! Hence, the mind which it manifests is likewise both good and evil—and the whole pretty theory blows up!"

He sat down abruptly, with the air of having given finality to a perplexing question.

All eyes then turned to Carmen, who slowly rose and surveyed the little group.

"It is not surprising," she said, smiling at the confused Haynerd, "that difficulties arise when you attempt to reach God through human reasoning—spirit through matter. You have taken the unreal, and, through it, have sought to reach back to the real."

"Well," interrupted Haynerd testily, "kindly explain the difference."

"Then, first," replied Carmen, "let us adopt some common meeting ground, some basis which we can all accept, and from which we can rise. Are you all agreed that, in our every-day life, everything is mental?—every action?—every object?—and that, as the philosopher Mill said, 'Everything is a feeling of which the mind is conscious'? Let me illustrate my meaning," she continued, noting Haynerd's rising protest. "I see this book; I take it up; and drop it upon the table. Have I really seen a book? No; I have been conscious of thoughts which I call a book, nothing more. A real material book did not get into my mind; but *thoughts* of a book did. And the activity of such thought resulted in a state of consciousness—for consciousness is mental activity, the activity of thought. Remember that, even according to your great physical scientists, this book is composed of millions of charges of electricity, or elec-

trons, moving at a tremendously high rate of speed. And yet, regardless of its composition, I am conscious only of my thoughts of the book. It is but my thoughts that I see, after all."

She paused and waited for the protest which was not voiced.

"Very well," she said, continuing; "so it is with the sense of touch; I had the thought of touching it, and that thought I saw; I was conscious of it when it became active in my mentality. So with sound; when I let the book drop, I was conscious of my thought of sound. If the book had been dropped in a vacuum I should not have been conscious of a thought of sound—why? Because, as Mr. Hitt has told us, the human mind has made its sense-testimony dependent upon vibrations. And yet, there is a clock ticking up there on the wall. Do you hear it?"

"Yes," replied Haynerd; "now that you've called my attention to it."

"Ah, yes," replied the girl. "You hear it when your thought is directed to it. And yet the air was vibrating all the time, and, if hearing is dependent upon the fleshly ear, you should have heard it incessantly when you were not thinking of it, as well as you hear it now when you are thinking of it. Am I not right?"

"Well, perhaps so," assented Haynerd with some reluctance.

"We hear, see, and feel," continued the girl, "when our thought is directed to these processes. And the processes are wholly mental—they take place within our mentalities—and it is there, within our minds, that we see, hear, and feel *all* things. And it is there, within our minds, that the universe exists for us. It is there that we hold our world, our fleshly bodies, everything that we call material. *The universe that we think we see all about us consists of the mental concepts, made up of thought, which we hold within our mentalities.*"

Haynerd nodded somewhat dubiously. Carmen proceeded with the exposition of her theme.

"Whence come these material thoughts that are within us? And are they real? Can we control them? And how? They are real to us, at any rate, are they not? And if they are thoughts of pain and suffering and death, they are terribly real to us. But let us see, now that we can reason from the basis of the mental nature of all things. We have agreed that the creative principle is mind, and we call it God. This infinite mind constantly expresses and manifests itself in ideas. Why, that is a fundamental law of mind! You express yourself in your ideas and thoughts, which you try to externalize materially. But the infinite mind expresses itself in an infinite

number and variety of ideas, all, like itself, pure, perfect, eternal, good, without any elements or seeds of decay or discord. And the incessant expression of the creative mind in and through its numberless ideas constitutes the never-ending process of creation."

"Let me add here," interrupted Hitt, "that the Bible states that God created the heavens and earth in seven days. But numbers, we must remember, were mystical things to the ancient Hebrews, and were largely used symbolically. The number seven, for example, was used to express wholeness, completeness. So we must remember that its use in Genesis has a much wider meaning than its absurd theological interpretation into seven solar days. As Carmen says, the infinite creative mind can never cease to express itself; creation can never cease; and creation is but the whole, complete revelation or unfoldment of infinite mind's ideas."

"And infinite mind," continued Carmen, "requires infinite time in which to completely express itself. So time ceases to be, and we find that all real things exist now, in an endless present. Now, the ideas of infinite mind range throughout the realm of infinity, but the greatest idea that the creative mind can have is the idea of itself. That idea is the image and likeness of the infinite creative mind. It is the perfect reflection of that mind—its perfect expression. That idea is what the man Jesus always saw back of the human concept of man. *That idea is the real man!*"

"Well!" exclaimed Haynerd. "That's quite a different proposition from the mud-men that I do business with daily. What are they? Children of God?"

"If they were real," said Carmen, "they would have to be children of God. But then they would not be 'mud-men.' Now I have just spoken of the real, the spiritual creation. That is the creation mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis, where all was created—revealed, unfolded—by God, and He saw that it was perfect, good. 'In the beginning,' says the commentator. That is, 'To begin with—God.' Everything begins with God in the realm of the real. The creative mind is first. And the creation, or unfoldment, is like its creative principle, eternal and good."

"But," persisted Haynerd, "how about the material man?"

"Having created all things spiritually," continued the girl, "was it necessary that the creative mind should repeat its work, do it over again, and produce the man of dust described in the second chapter of Genesis? Is that second account of the creation an inspiration of truth—or a human comment?"

"Call it what you will," said the cynical Haynerd; "the

fact remains that the mud-man exists and has to be reckoned with."

"Both of your premises are wholly incorrect," returned the girl gently. "He does *not* exist, excepting in human, mortal thought. He is a product of only such thought. He and his material universe are seen and dealt with only in such thought. And such thought is the direct antithesis of God's thought. And it is therefore unreal. It is the supposition, the lie, the mist that went up and darkened the earth."

"But—the human man—?"

"Is just what you have said, a hue of a man, a dark hue, the shadowy opposite which seems to counterfeit the real, spiritual man and claim all his attributes. He is not a compound of mind and matter, for we have seen that all things are mental, even matter itself. He is a sort of mentality, a counterfeit of real mind. His body and his universe are in himself. And, like all that is unreal, he is transient, passing, ephemeral, mortal."

"Yet, God made him!"

"No, for he does not exist, excepting in supposition. Does a supposition really exist? If so, then not even truth can destroy it. But supposition passes out before truth. No, the human mind is the 'old man' of Paul. He is to be put off by knowing his nothingness, and by knowing the unreality of his supposed material environment and universe. As he goes out of consciousness, the real man, the idea of God, perfect, harmonious, and eternal, comes in."

"And there," said Father Waite impressively, "you have the whole scheme of salvation, as enunciated by the man Jesus."

"There is no doubt of it," added Hitt. "And, oh, my friends! how futile, how base, how worse than childish now appear the whole theological fabric of the churches, their foolish man-made dogmas, their insensate beliefs in a fiery hell and a golden heaven. Oh, how belittling now appear their concepts of God—a God who can damn unbaptised infants, who can predestine his children to eternal sorrow, who creates and then curses his handiwork! Do you wonder that sin, sorrow, and death remain among us while such awful beliefs hold sway over the human mind? God help us, and the world!"

Haynerd, who had been sitting quietly for some moments, deep in thought, rose and held out his hands, as if in entreaty. "Don't—don't!" he exclaimed. "I can't hear any more. I want to think it all over. It seems—it seems as if a curtain had been raised suddenly. And what I see beyond is—"

Carmen went swiftly to the man and slipped an arm about

him. "That infinite creative Mind, so misunderstood and misinterpreted by human beings, is back of you," she whispered. "And it is Love."

Haynerd turned and grasped her hands. "I believe it," he murmured. "But had I not seen the proof in you, no amount of reasoning would have convinced me." And, bowing to the little group, he went out.

"Well?" said Hitt, turning inquiringly to the doctor.

The latter raised his head. "If these things are true," he made answer slowly, "then I shall have to recast my entire mentality, my whole basis of thinking."

"It is just what you *must* do, Doctor, if you would work out your salvation," said Carmen. "Jesus said we must repent if we would be saved. Repentance—the Greek *metanoia*—means a complete and radical change of thought."

"But—do you mean to say that the whole world has been mistaken? That the entire human race has been deceived for ages?"

"Why," said Hitt, "it was only in our own day, comparatively speaking, that the human race was undeceived in regard to the world being round. And there are thousands of human beings to-day who still believe in witchcraft, and who worship the sun and moon, and whose lives are wholly under the spell of superstition. Human character, a great scientist tells us, has not changed since history began."

"But we can't revamp our thought-processes!"

"Then we must go on missing the mark, sinning, suffering, sorrowing, and dying, over and over and over again, until we decide that we can do so," said Hitt.

The doctor looked at Carmen and met that same smile of unbounded love which she gave without stint to a sin-weary world.

"I—I'll come again," he said. "When? To-morrow night?"

"Yes," said Carmen, rising and coming around to him. "And," in a whisper, "bring Pat."

CHAPTER 6

THE Social Era had for many years made its weekly appearance every Saturday morning, that its fashionable clientele might appease their jaded appetites on the Sabbath day by nibbling at its spicy pabulum. But, though the Ames reception had fallen on a Saturday night, the following Friday morning found the columns of the Era still awaiting

a report of the notable affair. For Haynerd's hand seemed paralyzed. Whenever he set his pen to the task, there loomed before him only the scene in the little waiting room, and he could write of nothing else. He found himself still dwelling upon the awful contrast between the slender wisp of a girl and her mountainous opponent, as they had stood before him; and the terrifying thoughts of what was sure to follow in consequence drenched his skin with cold perspiration.

On the desk before him lay the essay which he had asked Carmen to write during the week, as her report of the brilliant event. He had read it through three times, and each time had read into it a new meaning. He dared not run it. Not that it ridiculed or condemned—at least, not openly—but because every one of its crisp comments admitted of an interpretation which revealed the hidden depths of the social system, and its gigantic incarnation, as if under the glare of a powerful searchlight. It was in no sense a muck-raking exposition. Rather, it was an interpretation, and a suggestion. It was, too, a prediction; but not a curse. The girl loved those about whom she wrote. And yet, he who read the essay aright would learn that her love stopped not at the flimsy veil of the flesh, but penetrated until it rested upon the fair spiritual image beyond. And then Haynerd saw that the essay was, in substance, a social clinic, to which all searchers after truth were bidden, that they might learn a great lesson from her skillful dissection of the human mind, and her keen analysis of its constituent thought.

As he sat wrapped in reflection, the early morning mail was brought in. He glanced up, and then started to his feet. The letters spread over his desk like an avalanche of snow; and the puffing mail carrier declared that he had made a special trip with them alone. Haynerd began to tear them open, one after another. Then he called the office boy, and set him at the task. There were more than five hundred of them, and each contained a canceled subscription to the Social Era.

A dark foreboding settled down over Haynerd's mind. He rose and went to the card-index to consult his subscription list. It was gone! He stood confusedly for a moment, then hastened to the window that looked out upon a fire-escape. Its lock lay broken upon the floor. He turned and rushed to the vault, which, reflecting his own habitual carelessness, was never locked. His ledgers and account books were not there. Then he crept back to his desk and sank into a chair.

The noon mail brought more letters of like nature, until the office boy tallied nearly eight hundred. Then Haynerd, as if rousing from a dream, reached for the telephone and summoned Hitt to his rescue. The Social Era was foundering.

Its mailing list had contained some fifteen hundred names. The subscription price was twelve dollars a year—and never, to his knowledge, had it been paid in advance by his ultra-rich patrons, most of whom were greatly in arrears. Haynerd saw it all vanishing now as quietly as the mist fades before the summer sun.

Within an hour the wondering Hitt was in conference with him, and Haynerd had told the story of the theft, of the Ames bribe, and the encounter following. "But," he cried, "can Ames kill my entire subscription list, and in a single week?"

"Easily," replied Hitt, "and in any one of several ways. Apparently he had caused your subscription list and books to be stolen. Your sun has set, Ned. Or, rather, Ames has lifted it bodily from the sky."

"Then I'll shoot him! I'll—! But we've got the goods on him! Carmen and I saw him bribe Wales! We'll expose him!"

Hitt laughed. "Forget all that," he said, laying a hand on the excited man's arm. "Remember, that Wales would never dare breathe a word of it; Carmen has no reputation or standing whatsoever now in this city; and Ames would make out a case of blackmail against you so quickly that it would sweep you right into the Tombs. Go easy. And first, let us get the girl herself down here."

He took the telephone and called up several of the University departments, after first ascertaining that she was not at her home. Then, having located her, he plunged into a study of the situation with the distracted publisher.

"That's the way of it!" cried Haynerd at length. "Here I waste my evenings in learned philosophical discussions with you people, and meantime, while we're figuring out that there is no evil, that monster, Ames, stretches out a tentacle and strangles me! Fine practical discussions we've been having, ain't they? I tell you, I'm through with 'em!" He brought his fist down upon the desk with a crash.

"Ned," said Hitt, "you're a fool."

"Sure I am!" shouted Haynerd. "Do I deny it? Here I had a nice, clean business, no work, good pay—and, just because I associated with you and that girl, the whole damn thing goes up the flue! Pays to be good, doesn't it? Nix!"

"H'm; well, Ned, you're not only a fool, but a blooming idiot," replied Hitt calmly.

"Lay it on! Lay it on thick!" roared Haynerd. "And if you run out of epithets, I'll supply a few! I'm a—"

The door swung open, and Carmen entered, fresh as the sea breeze, and panting with her haste. "Do you know," she began eagerly, "two men followed me all the way down from

the University! They watched me come in here, and—but, what is wrong with you two?" She stopped and looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"Well," began Hitt hesitatingly, "we were reflecting—"

"Reflecting? What? Good, or evil?" she demanded.

"We were just holding a wake, that's all," muttered Haynerd.

"Then wake up!" she cried, seizing his hand.

Hitt pushed out a chair for the girl, and bade her sit down. Then he briefly related the events which had led to her being summoned. "And now," he concluded, "the question is, does Wales know that you and Ned saw Ames try to bribe him?"

"Why, of course he knows!" cried Carmen. "His wife told him."

"And who informed her?"

"I did—last Monday morning, early," answered the wondering girl.

"Didn't I tell you?" ejaculated Haynerd, turning upon Hitt and waving his arms about. "What do you—"

"Hold your tongue, Ned!" interrupted Hitt. Then, to Carmen, "Why did you tell her?"

"Why—to save her, and her husband, and babies! I told her because it was right! You know it was right!"

"But, to save them, you have ruined Ned," pursued Hitt.

The girl turned to Haynerd, who sat doubled up in his chair, the picture of despair. "I haven't ruined you, Ned." It was the first time she had used this name in addressing him. "Things never happen, you know. And if you have been pushed out of this business, it is because it isn't fit for you, and because you've been awakened. You are for higher, better things than the publishing of such a magazine as the Social Era. I knew you just couldn't stay at this work. You have got to go up—"

"Eh!" Haynerd had roused out of his torpor. "Go up? Yes, I've gone up, nicely! And I was making ten thousand dollars a year out of it! It was a bully proposition!" he blurted.

The girl smiled. "I wasn't speaking of money," she said.

"But I was!" retorted Haynerd. "When I talk, it's in dollars and cents!"

"And that's why your talk is mostly nonsense," put in Hitt. "The girl's right, I guess. You've stagnated here long enough, Ned. There's no such thing as standing still. Progress is a divine demand. It's now your move."

"But—good Lord! what am I to do?" wailed the man.

"You now have a grand opportunity," said Carmen, taking his hand.

"Opportunity!"

"Yes; every trial in this life is an opportunity to prove that there is no evil," she said. "Listen; you have been trained as a publisher. Very well, the world is waiting for the right kind of publications. Oh, I've seen it for a long, long time. The demand is simply tremendous. Now meet it!"

Haynerd looked confusedly from Carmen to Hitt. The latter turned to the girl. "What, exactly, do you mean, Carmen?" he asked.

"Let him publish now a clean magazine, or paper; let him print real news; let him work, not for rich people's money, but for all people. Why, the press is the greatest educator in the world! But, oh, how it has been abused! Now let him come out boldly and stand for clean journalism. Let him find his own life, his own good, in service for others."

"But, Carmen," protested Hitt, "do the people want clean journalism? Could such a paper stand?"

"It could, if it had the right thought back of it," returned the confident girl.

Haynerd had again lapsed into sulky silence. But Hitt pondered the girl's words for some moments. She was not the first nor the only one who had voiced such sentiments. He himself had even dared to hold the same thoughts, and to read in them a leading that came not from material ambitions. Then, of a sudden, an idea flamed up in his mind.

"The Express!" he exclaimed.

Carmen waited expectantly. Hitt's eyes widened with his expanding thought. "Carlson, editor of the Express, wants to sell," he continued, speaking rapidly.

"It's a semi-weekly newspaper, printed only for country circulation; has no subscription list," commented Haynerd, with a cynical shrug of his shoulders.

"Buy it!" exclaimed Carmen. "Buy it! And change it into a daily! Make it a real newspaper!"

Hitt looked into Carmen's glowing eyes. "How old are you?" he suddenly asked. The abruptness of the strange, apparently irrelevant question startled the girl.

"Why," she replied slowly, "as old as—as God. And as young."

"And, as human beings reckon time, eighteen, eh?" continued Hitt.

She nodded, wondering what the question meant. Hitt then turned to Haynerd. "How much money can you scrape together, if you sell this lot of junk?" he asked, sweeping the place with a glance.

"Five or six thousand, all told, including bank account,

bonds, and everything, I suppose," replied Haynerd mechanically.

"Carlson wants forty thousand for the Express. I'm not a rich man, as wealth is estimated to-day, but—well, oil is still flowing down in Ohio. It isn't the money—it's—it's what's back of the cash."

Carmen reached over and laid a hand on his arm. "We can do it," she whispered.

Hitt hesitated a moment longer, then sprang to his feet. "And we will!" he cried. "I've pondered and studied this scheme for a year, but I've only to-day seen the right help. That is your tremendous, driving thought," he said, turning to Carmen. "That thought is a spiritual dynamite, that will blast its way through every material obstacle! Ned," seizing Haynerd by the shoulder and shaking him out of his chair, "rouse up! Your light has come! Now I'll 'phone Carlson right away and make an appointment to talk business with him. You'll stand with me, Carmen?"

"Yes," she said simply.

"And you, Ned?"

Haynerd blinked for a few moments, like an owl in the light. But then, as a comprehension of Hitt's plan dawned upon his waking thought, he straightened up.

"Buy the Express! Make a real paper of it! A—but Ames?"

"He can't touch us! The clientele of the Express will not be made up of his puppets! Our paper will be for the people!"

"But—your University work, Hitt?"

"I give my last lecture next week."

"And you, Carmen?"

"I was only biding my time," she replied gently. "This is a real call. And my answer is: Here am I."

Tears began to trickle slowly down Haynerd's cheeks, as the tension in his nerves slackened. He rose and seized the hands of his two friends. "Hitt," he said, in a choking voice, "I—I said I was a fool. But that fellow's dead now. The real man has waked up, and—well, what are you standing there for, you great idiot? Go and call up Carlson!"

* * * * * *

Again that evening the little group sat about the table in the dining room of the Beaubien cottage. But only the three most directly concerned, and the Beaubien, knew that the owner of the Express had received that afternoon an offer for the purchase of his newspaper, and that he had been given twenty-four hours in which to accept it. Doctor Morton was again present; and beside him sat his lifelong friend and joust-

ing-mate, the very Reverend Patterson Moore. Hitt took the floor, and began speaking low and earnestly.

"We must remember," he said, "in conjunction with what we have deduced regarding the infinite creative mind and its manifestations, that we mortals in our daily mundane existence deal only and always with phenomena, with appearances, with effects, and never with ultimate causes. And so all our material knowledge is a knowledge of appearances only. Of the ultimate essence of things, the human mind knows nothing. All of its knowledge is relative. A phenomenon may be so-and-so with regard to another; but that either is absolute truth we can not affirm. And yet—mark this well—as Spencer says, 'Every one of the arguments by which the relativity of our knowledge is demonstrated distinctly postulates the positive existence of something beyond the relative.' "

"And just what does that mean?" asked Miss Wall.

"It is a primitive statement of what is sometimes called the 'Theory of suppositional opposites,' " replied Hitt. "It means that to every reality there is the corresponding unreality. For every truth there may be postulated the supposition. We can not, as the great philosopher says, conceive that our knowledge is a knowledge of appearances only, without at the same time conceiving a reality of which they are appearances. He further amplifies this by saying that 'every positive notion—the concept of a thing by what it is—suggests a negative notion—the concept of a thing by what it is not. But, though these mutually suggest each other, *the positive alone is real.*' Most momentous language, that! For, interpreted, it means: we must deny the seeming, or that which appears to human sense, in order to see that which is real."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Miss Wall, glancing about to note the effect of the speaker's words on the others.

But Carmen nodded her thorough agreement, and added: "Did not Jesus say that we must deny ourselves? Deny which self? Why, the self that appears to us, the matter-man, the dust-man, the man of the second chapter of Genesis. We must deny his reality, and know that he is nothing but a mental concept, formed out of suppositional thought, out of dust-thought. And that is material thought."

"Undoubtedly correct," said Hitt, turning to Carmen. "But, before we consider the astonishing teachings of Jesus, let us sum up the conclusions of philosophy. To begin with, then, there is a First Cause, omnipotent and omnipresent, and of very necessity perfect. That Cause lies back of all the phenomena of life; and, because of its real existence, there arises the suppositional existence of its opposite, its negative, so to

speak, which is unreal. The phenomena of human existence have to do *only* with the suppositional existence of the great First Cause's opposite. They are a reflection of that supposition. Hence all human knowledge of an external world is but phenomenal, and consists of appearances which have no more real substance than have shadows. *We, as mortals, know but the shadowy, phenomenal existence. We do not know reality. Therefore, our knowledge is not real knowledge, but supposition.*

"Now," he went on hastily, for he saw an expression of protest on Reverend Moore's face, "we are more or less familiar with a phenomenal existence, with appearances, with effects; and our knowledge of these is entirely mental. We see all things as thought. These thoughts, such as feeling, seeing, hearing, and so on, we ignorantly attribute to the five physical senses. This is what Ruskin calls the 'pathetic fallacy.' And because we do so, we find ourselves absolutely dependent upon these senses—in belief. Moreover, quoting Spencer again, only the absolutely real is the absolutely persistent, or enduring. Truth, for example. The truth of the multiplication table will endure eternally. It is real. But is it any whit material?"

"No," admitted Miss Wall, speaking for the others.

"And, as regards material objects which we seem to see and touch," went on Hitt, "we appear to see solidity and hardness, and we conceive as real objects what are only the mental signs or indications of objects. Remember, matter does not and can not get into the mind. Only thoughts and ideas enter our mentalities. We see our *thoughts* of hardness, solidity, and so on; and these thoughts point to something that is real. That *something* is—what? I repeat: *the ideas of the infinite creative Mind.* The thoughts of size, shape, hardness, and so on, which we group together and call material chairs, trees, mountains, and other objects, are but 'relative realities,' pointing to the absolute reality, infinite mind and its eternal ideas and thoughts."

He paused again for comments. But all seemed absorbed in his statements. Then he resumed:

"Our concept of matter, which is now proven to be but a mental concept, built up out of false thought, points to *mind* as the real substance. Our concept of measurable space and distance is the direct opposite of the great truth that infinite mind is ever-present. Our concept of time is the opposite of infinity. It is but human limitation. Age is the opposite of eternity—and the old-age thought brings extinction. So, *to every reality there is the corresponding unreality.* The opposite of good is evil. If the infinite creative mind is good—and

we saw that by very necessity it *must* be so—then evil becomes an awful unreality, and is real only to the false thought which entertains or holds it. If life is real—and infinite mind must itself be life—then death becomes the opposite unreality. And, as Jesus said, it can be overcome. But were it real, *no power, divine or human, could ever overcome or destroy it!*"

"Seems to me," remarked Haynerd dryly, "that our study so far simply goes to show, as Burke puts it, 'what shadows we are and what shadows we pursue.' "

Hitt smiled. "When the world humiliates itself to the point that it will accept that, my friend," he said, "then it will become receptive to truth.

"But now let us go a little further," he went on. "The great Lamarck voiced a mighty fact when he said, 'Function precedes structure.' For by that we mean that the egg did not produce the bird, but the bird the egg. The world seems about to pass from the very foolish belief that physical structure is the cause of life, to the great fact that a *sense* of life produces the physical structure. The former crude belief enslaved man to his body. The latter tends to free him from such slavery."

"You see, Doctor," interrupted Carmen, "the brain which you were cutting up the other day did not make poor Yorick's mind and thought, but his mind made the brain."

The doctor smiled and shook a warning finger at the girl.

"The body," resumed Hitt, "is a manifestation of the human mind's activity. What constitutes the difference between a bird and a steam engine? This, in part: the engine is made by human hands from without; the bird makes itself, that is, its body, from within. So it is with the human body. But the ignorant human mind—ignorant *per se*—falls a slave to its own creation, the mental concept which it calls its physical body, and which it pampers and pets and loves, until it can cling to it no longer, because the mental concept, not being based on any real principle, is forced to pass away, having nothing but false thought to sustain it."

"But now," interposed Haynerd, who was again waxing impatient, "just what is the practical application of all this abstruse reasoning?"

"The very greatest imaginable, my friend," replied Hitt. "A real thing is real forever. And so matter can not become non-existent *unless it is already nothing!* The world is beginning to recognize the tremendous fact that from nothing nothing can be made. Very well, since the law of the conservation of energy seems to be established as regards energy *in toto*, why, we must conclude that there is no such thing as *annihila-*

tion. And that means that *there is no such thing as absolute creation!* Whatever is real has always existed. The shadow never was real, and does not exist. And so creation becomes unfolding, or revelation, or development, of what already exists, and has always existed, and always will exist. Therefore, if matter, and all it includes as concomitants, evil, sin, sickness, accident, chance, lack, and death, is based upon unreal, false thought, then it can all be removed, put out of consciousness, by a knowledge of truth and a reversal of our accustomed human thought-processes."

"And that," said Carmen, "is salvation. It is based on righteousness, which is right-thinking, thinking true thoughts, and thinking truly."

"And knowing," added Hitt, "that evil, including matter, is the suppositional opposite of truth. The doctrine of materialism has been utterly disproved even by the physicists themselves. For physicists have at last agreed that inertia is the great essential property of matter. That is, matter is not a cause, but an effect. It does not operate, but is operated upon. It is not a law-giver, but is subject to the human mind's so-called laws concerning it. It of itself is utterly without life or intelligence.

"Very good," he continued. "Now Spencer said that matter was a manifestation of an underlying power or force. Physicists tell us that matter is made of electricity, that it is an electrical phenomenon, and that the ultimate constituent of matter is the electron. The electron is said by some to be made up of superimposed layers of positive and negative electricity, and by others to be made up of only negative charges. I rather prefer the latter view, for if composed of only negative electricity it is more truly a negation. Matter is the *negative* of real substance. It is a sort of negative truth.

"Now electricity is a form of energy. Hence matter is a form of energy also. But our comprehension of it is *wholly mental.* Energy is mental. The only real energy there is or can be is the energy of the infinite mind we call God. This the human mind copies, or imitates, by reason of what has been called 'the law of suppositional opposites,' already dwelt upon at some length. Everything manifests this so-called law. Electricity is both positive and negative. Gravitation is regarded by some physicists as the negative aspect of radiation-pressure, the latter being the pressure supposed to be exerted by all material bodies upon one another. The third law of motion illustrates this so-called law, for it states that action and reaction are equal and opposite. There can be no positive action without a resultant negative one. The truth has its lie. The

divine mind, God, has His opposite in the communal human, or mortal, mind. The latter is manifested by the so-called minds which we call mankind. And from these so-called minds issue matter and material forms and bodies, with their so-called material laws.

"Yes, the material universe is running down. Stupendous fact! The entire human concept is running down. Matter, the human mental concept, is not eternally permanent. Neither, therefore, are its concomitants, sin and discord. Matter disintegrates and passes away—out of human consciousness. The whole material universe—the so-called mortal-mind concept—is hastening to its death!"

"But as yet I think you have not given Mr. Haynerd the practical application which he asks," suggested Father Waite, as Hitt paused after his long exposition.

"I am now ready for that," replied Hitt. "We have said that the material is the relative. So all human knowledge is relative. But, that being so, we can go a step further and add that human error is likewise relative. And now—startling fact!—*it is absolutely impossible to really know error!*"

"Why—!" burst from the incredulous Miss Wall.

"Well?" said Hitt, turning to her. "Can you know that two plus two equals seven?"

"N—no."

"Let me make this statement of truth: nothing can be known definitely except as it is explained by the principle which governs it. Now what principle governs an error, whether that error be in music, mathematics, or life conduct?"

There was no reply to the question.

"Very well," continued Hitt. "Evil can not be really known. And that is why God—infinite Mind—can not behold evil. And now, friends, I have come to the conclusion of a long series of deductions. If infinite mind is the cause and creator, that is, the revealer, of all that really exists, its suppositional opposite, its negative, must likewise simulate a creation, or revelation, or unfolding, for this opposite must of very necessity pose as a creative principle. It must simulate all the powers and attributes of the infinite creative mind. If the creative mind gave rise to a spiritual universe and spiritual man, by which it expresses itself, then this suppositional opposite must present its universe and its man, opposite in every particular to the reality. *It is this sort of man and this sort of universe that we, as mortals, seem to see all about us, and that we refer to as human beings and the physical universe.* And yet, all that we see, feel, hear, smell, or taste is the false, suppositional thought that comes into our so-called mentalities, and by its supposi-

tional activity there causes what we call consciousness or awareness of things."

"Then," said Father Waite, more to enunciate his own thought than to question the deduction, "what the human consciousness holds as knowledge is little more than belief and speculation, with no basis of truth, no underlying principle."

"Just so. And it brings out the fruits of such beliefs in discord, decay, and final dissolution, called death. For this human consciousness forms its own concept of a fleshly body, and a mind-and-matter man. It makes the laws which govern its body, and it causes its body to obey these false laws. Upon the quality of thought entering this human consciousness depend all the phenomena of earthly life and environment which the mortal experiences. The human consciousness, in other words, is a *self-centered mass of erroneous thought, utterly without any basis of real principle, but actively engaged in building up mental images, and forming and maintaining an environment in which it supposes itself to live. This false thought in the human consciousness forms into a false concept of man, and this is the soul-and-body man, the mind-and-matter man, which is called a human being, or a mortal.*"

"And there," commented Carmen, with a dreamy, far-away look, "we have what Padre José so long ago spoke of as the 'externalization of thought.' It is the same law which Jesus had in mind when he said, 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'"

"Yes," said Hitt. "For we know only what enters our mentalities and becomes active there. And every thought that does so enter, tends at once to become externalized. That is, there is at once the tendency for us to see it visualized in some way, either as material object, or environment, or on our bodies. And it is the very activity of such thought that constitutes the human mentality, as I have already said."

"And that thought is continually changing," suggested Father Waite.

"Just so. Its very lack of true principle requires that it should change constantly, in order to simulate as closely as possible the real. That accounts for the fleeting character of the whole human concept of man and the physical universe. The human personality is never fixed, although the elements of human character remain; that is, those elements which are essentially unreal and mortal, such as lust, greed, hatred, and materiality, seem to remain throughout the ages. They will give way only before truth, even as Paul said. But not until truth has been admitted to the human mentality and begins its solvent work there, the work of denying and tearing down

the false thought-concepts and replacing them with true ones."

"And will truth come through the physical senses?" asked Miss Wall.

"No, decidedly no!" said Hitt. "The physical senses testify of nothing. Their supposed testimony is the material thought which enters the human mentality and becomes active there, resulting in human consciousness of both good and evil. And that thought will have to give way to true thought, before we can begin to put off the 'old man' and put on the 'new.' Human thoughts, or, as we say, the physical senses, do not and can not testify of absolute truth. They do not know God."

"Ha!" exclaimed Haynerd, rousing up. "There goes the Church, and original sin, and fallen man!"

"There is no such thing as 'fallen man,' my friend," said Hitt quietly. "The spiritual man, the image and likeness, the reflection, of the infinite creative mind, is perfect as long as its principle remains perfect—and that is eternally. The mortal man never was perfect. He is a product of false, suppositional thought. He is not and never was man. He did not fall, because he has had no perfection to lose."

Reverend Patterson Moore, who had sat a silent, though not wholly sympathetic listener throughout the discussion, could now no longer withhold his protest. "No wonder," he abruptly exclaimed, "that there are so few deep convictions to-day concerning the great essentials of Christianity! As I sit here and listen to you belittle God and rend the great truths of His Christ, as announced in His Word, the Bible, I am moved by feelings poignantly sorrowful! The Christ has once been crucified; and will you slay him again?"

"No," said Carmen, her eyes dilating with surprise, "but we would resurrect him! Don't you think you have kept him in the tomb long enough? The Christ-principle is intended for use, not for endless burial!"

"I? My dear Miss Carmen, it is I who preach the risen Christ!"

"You preach human theology, Mr. Moore," returned the girl. "And because of centuries of such preaching the world has steadily sunk from the spiritual to the material, and lip service has taken the place of that genuine spiritual worship which knows no evil, and which, because of that practical knowledge, heals the sick and raises the dead."

"You insinuate that—"

"No, I state facts," said Carmen. "Paul made some mistakes, for he was consumed with zeal. But he stated truth when he said that the second coming of Christ would occur when the 'old man' was put off. We have been discussing the

'old man' to-night, and showing how he may be put off. Now do you from your pulpit teach your people how that may be done?"

"I teach the vicarious atonement of the Christ, and prepare my flock for the world to come," replied the minister with some heat.

"But I am interested in the eternal present," said the girl, "not in a suppositional future. And so was Jesus. The world to come is right here. 'I am that which is, and which was, and which is to come,' says the infinite, ever-present mind, God!"

"I see no Christianity whatsoever in your speculative philosophy," retorted the minister. "If what you say is true, and the world should accept it, all that we have learned in the ages past would be blotted out, and falsehood would be written across philosophy, science, and religion. By wafting evil lightly aside as unreal, you dodge the issue, and extend license to all mankind to indulge it freely. Evil is an awful, a stupendous fact! And it can not be relegated to the realm of shadow, as you are trying to do!"

"Did Jesus regard it as a reality?" she asked. "You know, Duns Scotus said: 'Since there is no real being outside of God, evil has no substantial existence. Perfection and reality are synonyms, hence absolute imperfection is synonymous with absolute unreality.' Did Jesus know less than this man? And do you really think he looked upon evil as a *reality?*"

"He most certainly did!"

"Then, if that is true," said the girl, "I will have to reject him. But come, we are right up to the point of discussing him and his teachings, and that will be the subject of our next meeting. Will you join us, Mr. Moore? It is love, you know, that has drawn us all together. You'll come?"

"It's an open forum, Moore," said the doctor, patting him on the back. "Wisdom isn't going to die with you. Come and get a new viewpoint."

"I am quite well satisfied with my present one, Doctor," replied the minister tartly.

"Well, then, come and correct us when we err. It's your duty to save us if we're in danger, you know."

"He will come," said Hitt. "And now, Carmen, the piano awaits you. By the way, what did Maitre Rossanni tell you?"

"Oh," replied the girl lightly, "he begged me to let him train me for Grand Opera."

"Yes?"

"He said I would make a huge fortune," she laughed.

"And so you would! Well?"

"I told him I carried my wealth with me, always, and that my fortune was now so immense that I couldn't possibly hope to add to it."

"Then you refused the chance!"

"My dear Mr. Hitt," she said, going to him and looking up into his face, "I am too busy for Grand Opera and money-making. My voice belongs to the world. I couldn't be happy if I made people pay to hear me sing."

With that she turned and seated herself at the piano, where she launched into a song that made the very Reverend Patterson Moore raise his glasses and stare at her long and curiously.

CHAPTER 7

MAN reasons and seeks human counsel; but woman obeys her instincts. Carmen did this and more. Her life had been one of utter freedom from dependence upon human judgment. The burden of decision as to the wisdom of a course of action rested always upon her own thought. Never did she seek to make a fellow-being her conscience. When the day of judgment came, the hour of trial or vital demand, it found her standing boldly, because her love was made perfect, not through instinct alone, but through conformity with the certain knowledge that he who lacks wisdom may find it in the right thought of God and man. And so, when on the next day she joined Hitt and Haynerd in the office of the Social Era, and learned that Carlson had met their terms, eagerly, and had transferred to them the moribund Express, she had no qualms as to the wisdom of the step which they were taking.

But not so her companions. Haynerd was a composite picture of doubt and fear, as he sat humped up in his chair. Hitt was serious to the point of gloom, reflecting in a measure his companion's dismal forebodings.

"I was scared to death for fear he wouldn't sell," Haynerd was saying as the girl entered; "and I was paralyzed whenever I thought that he would."

Carmen laughed aloud when she heard these words. "Do you know," she said, "you remind me of Lot's wife. She was told to go ahead, along the right course. But she looked back —alas for her! Now you two being started right are looking back; and you are about to turn to salt tears!

"Now listen," she continued, as Haynerd began to remonstrate; "don't voice a single fear to me! You couldn't make me believe them true even if you argued for weeks—and we

have no time for such foolishness now. The first thing that you have got to do, Ned, is to start a little cemetery. In it you must bury your fears, right away, and without any mourning. Put up little headstones, if you wish; but don't ever go near the place afterward, excepting to plant the insults, and gibes, and denouncements, and vilifications which the human mind will hurl at you, once the Express starts out on its new career. Good is bound to stir up evil; and the Express is now in the business of good. Remember, the first thing the Apostles always did was to be afraid. And they kept Jesus busy pointing out the nothingness of their fears."

"Business of good!" retorted Haynerd savagely. "I guess we'll find ourselves a bit lonely in it, too!"

"True, humanly speaking," replied the girl, taking a chair beside him. "But, Ned, let me tell you of the most startling thing I have found in this great, new country. It is this: you Americans have, oh, so much animal courage—and so little true moral courage! You know that the press is one of the most corrupt institutions in America, don't you? The truth is not in it. Going into thousands of homes every day, it is a deadlier menace than yellow fever. You know that it is muzzled by so-called religious bodies, by liquor interests, by vice-politicians, by commercialism, and its own craven cowardice. And yet, Ned, despite your heart-longing, you dare not face the world and stand boldly for righteousness in the conduct of the Express!

"Now," she went on hurriedly, "let me tell you more. While you have been debating with your fears as you awaited Mr. Carlson's decision, I have been busy. If I had allowed my mentality to become filled with fear and worry, as you have done, I would have had no room for real, constructive thought. But I first thanked God for this grand opportunity to witness to Him; and then I put out every mental suggestion of failure, of malicious enmity from the world, and from those who think they do not love us, and with it every subtle argument about the unpreparedness of the human mind for good. After that I set out to visit various newspaper offices in the city. I have talked with four managing and city editors since yesterday noon. I have their viewpoints now, and know what motives animate them. I know what they think. I know, in part, what the Express will have to meet—and how to meet it."

Both men stared at her in blank amazement. Haynerd's jaw dropped as he gazed. He had had a long apprenticeship in the newspaper field, but never would he have dared attempt what this fearless girl had just done.

"I have found out what news is," Carmen resumed. "It is

wholly *a human invention!* It is the published vagaries of the carnal mind. In the yellow journal it is the red-inked, screaming report of the tragedies of sin. I asked Mr. Fallom if he knew anything about mental laws, and the terrible results of mental suggestion in his paper's almost hourly heralding of murder, theft, and lust. But he only laughed and said that the lurid reports of crime tended to keep people alive to what was going on about them. He couldn't see that he was making a terrible reality of every sort of evil, and holding it so constantly before an ignorant, credulous world's eyes that little else could be seen. The moral significance of his so-called news reports had no meaning whatsoever for him!"

"Did you go to see Adams?" asked Haynerd, not believing that she would have dared visit that journalistic demon.

"Yes," answered the girl, to his utter astonishment. "Mr. Adams said he had no time for maudlin sentimentalism or petticoat sophistry. He was in the business of collecting and disseminating news, and he wanted that news to go *shrieking* out of his office! Here is one of his afternoon extras. You can see how the report of an Italian wife-murder shrieks in red letters an inch high on the very first page. But has Mr. Adams thereby seen and met his opportunity? Or has he further prostituted journalism by this ignorant act?"

"The people want it, Carmen," said Hitt slowly, though his voice seemed not to sound a real conviction.

"They do not!" cried Carmen, her eyes snapping. "If the church and the press were not mortally and morally blind, they would see the deadly destruction which they are accomplishing by shrieking from pulpit and sanctum: 'Evil is real! Pietro Lasanni cuts his wife's throat! Evil is real! Look, and be convinced!' "

"But, Carmen, while what you say is doubtless true, it must be admitted that the average man, especially the day laborer, reads his yellow journal avidly, and—"

"Yes, he does," returned the girl. "And why? The average man, as you call him, is a victim of *the most pernicious social system ever devised by the human mind!* Swept along in the mad rush of commercialism, or ground down beneath its ruthless wheels, his jaded, jarred nerves and his tired mind cry out for artificial stimulation, for something that will for a moment divert his wearied thought from his hopeless situation. The Church offers him little that is tangible this side of the grave. But whiskey, drugs, and yellow journalism do. Can't you see, Mr. Hitt—can't you, Ned—that the world's cry for sensationalism is but a cry for something that will make it forget its misery for a brief moment? The average man feels

the superficiality of the high speed of this century of mad rush; he longs as never before for a foundation of truth upon which to rest; he is tired of theological fairy-tales; he is desperately tired of sin, and sickness, and dying. He cares little about a promised life beyond the grave. He wants help here and now to solve his problems. What does the press offer him? Little beyond a recount of his own daily miseries, and reports of graft and greed, and accounts of vulgar displays of material wealth that he has not and can not have. And these reports divert his jaded mind for a moment and give him a false, fleeting sense of pleasure—and then leave him sunk deeper than before in despair, and in hatred of existing conditions!"

"The girl is right," said Hitt, turning to Haynerd. "And we knew it, of course. But we have let our confidence slip. This steam-calliope age reflects the human-mind struggle for something other than its own unsatisfying ideas. It turns to thrills; it expresses its restlessness and dissatisfaction with itself by futurist and cubist art, so-called; by the rattle and vibration of machinery; by flaring billboards that insult every sense of the artistic; and by the murk and muck of yellow journalism, with its hideous colored supplements and spine-thrilling tales. So much for the reader. But the publisher himself—well, he battens materially, of course, upon the tired victims of our degrading social system. He sees but the sordid revenue in dollars and cents. Beyond that his morals do not extend."

"And they can't," said Haynerd. "Decent journalism wouldn't pay—doesn't—never did! Other papers have tried it, and miserably failed!"

"Then," returned Hitt calmly, after a moment's reflection, "oil will meet the deficit. As long as my paternal wells flow in Ohio the Express will issue forth as a clean paper, a dignified, law-supporting purveyor to a taste for better things—even if it has to create that taste. Its columns will be closed to salacious sensation, and its advertising pages will be barred to vice, liquor, tobacco, and drugs."

"Good!" cried Carmen. "And now we've got to get right down to business."

"Just so," said Hitt, rising. "It is my intention to issue the Express one more week on its present basis, and then turn it into a penny morning daily. I have seen and talked with its staff. They're good men. I'm going to assume the management myself, with you, Carmen, as my first assistant. Haynerd will become city editor. Now, what suggestions have you?"

"Oh, lots!" cried the girl enthusiastically. "But, first, how far may I go?"

"The limit," replied Hitt, rubbing his hands together. "You are my brain, so to speak, henceforth. As to financial resources, I am prepared to dump a hundred thousand dollars right into the Express before a cent of revenue comes back."

"Another question, then: will you issue a Sunday edition?" she asked.

"For a while, yes," he said. "We'll see how it works, for I have some ideas to try out."

"Well, then," resumed the girl eagerly, "I want this paper to be for *all* the people; to be independent in the truest sense of the term; and to be absolutely beyond the influence of political and religious sectarianism—you'll soon enough learn what that will cost you—to be an active, constructive force in this great city, and a patient, tireless, loving educator."

"Humph!" grunted Haynerd, although he was listening very carefully.

"The Express will succeed," the girl went on, without noticing him, "because our thought regarding it is successful. *We* have already succeeded; and that success will be externalized in our work. It makes no difference what the people may think of *us;* but it makes a lot of difference what *we* think of *them* and *ourselves.* Now, our program is unlimited. We assume superiority over adverse conditions, and we claim success, because we know that these things are mental, and that they are divinely ours. Lot's wife didn't have the sort of confidence that wins—she looked back. Our bridges are burnt behind us now. But there is no doubt of the outcome. And so there is no doubt lurking in us to take the edge off our efforts, is there? The thought regarding the Express has not been timidly born within us; it has come forth flashing vigor! Yes it has, Ned, despite your doubts! And we have within us a power mightier than any force outside of us. That is the knowledge of infinite mind's omnipotence, and our ability to use the Christ-principle to meet *every* problem. Is it not so?"

Haynerd began to rouse up with a returning sense of confidence. Hitt smiled and nodded to Carmen. The girl went on rapidly and eagerly:

"We are going to give the people news from a new standpoint, aren't we? We are not going on the assumption that the report of mankind's errors is the report of real news. The only thing that is really new is *good.* We'll report that. When I was in Mr. Adams's office two items came in over the 'phone. One was the report of a jewel robbery, and the other was an announcement of the draining by the Government of submerged lands in Louisiana, so as to give an additional opportunity to those seeking farms. Which item did Mr. Adams put

in bold type on the front page? The first, yes. I was unable to locate the latter anywhere in the paper, although it was a timely bit of news."

"Very true," replied Hitt.

"Now another thing," continued the girl. "I want the Sunday edition of the Express to contain a résumé of the important and vital news of the week, with the very clearest, most impartial and enlightening editorial comment upon it. This calls for nice discrimination in the selection of those items for our comment. It means, however, the best practical education for the people. This was John Ruskin's idea, and certainly is a splendid one. Still another thing, the Express will stand shoulder to shoulder with the women for equal suffrage. Are you agreed?"

"Most emphatically!" declared Hitt. "It is the women who will clean up and regenerate this world, not the men. Reform is now in the hands of the women. They have been held back long enough. And India proves that backward women mean a backward nation."

"Then," continued Carmen, "make a distinct Women's Department in the Express, and put Miss Wall on the staff."

"Very well. Next?" inquired Hitt, smiling.

"A daily educational department for foreigners, our immigrants, giving them every possible aid in suggestions regarding their naturalization, the languages, hotels, boarding houses, employment, and so on."

"Done," said Hitt. "And what else?"

"The Express is going to maintain a social service, and night schools. It is going to establish vacation and permanent homes for girls. It is going to provide for vocational training. It is going to establish a lecture bureau—for lectures on *good*. It is going to build a model city for workingmen. Then it is going to found a model city for everybody. It is going to establish clubs and meeting places for workingmen, places where they may meet, and play games, and read, and have social intercourse, and practical instruction. It is going to establish the same for young boys. It is going to take the lead for civic betterment in this city, and for child-welfare, and for—"

By this time Haynerd was sitting erect and staring in bewilderment at the girl. "What do you mean?" he sputtered. "Aren't you wandering somewhat beyond strict newspaper limits? We are in the news business!"

"And haven't I told you," returned the girl promptly, "that the only thing new in this world is *good*? Our news is going to be *good* news—the collection and dissemination of *good* to all mankind. People who read our paper will no longer feel

that it is dangerous to be alive, but a glorious privilege. I am simply laying out our program. And Mr. Hitt said I could go the limit, you know."

Hitt had caught the girl's infectious enthusiasm, and his face was beaming.

"That's it!" he exclaimed. "It's your unlimited thought, Carmen, that we old dry-bones want! I understand you!"

"Of course you do!" she cried. "And so does dear old protesting Ned. Why, what is money? What is anything in this life, compared with real service to our fellow-men? *The Express is not in business to make money!* It is in the business of collecting and scattering the news of good. Its dividends will be the happiness and joy it gives to mankind. Will it fail? It simply can't! For *good is the greatest success there is!*"

It is likely that Hitt did not catch the full meaning of the girl's words; and it is certain that Haynerd did not. But her boundless enthusiasm did penetrate in large degree into their souls, and they ceased to insist on the query, Will it pay? The broader outlook was already beginning to return profits to these men, as the newer definition of 'news' occupied their thought. Fear and doubt fled. Seizing their hats, they bade Carmen go with them to inspect the plant of the Express, and meet its staff.

"There's a question I'd like to ask," said Haynerd, as they pursued their way toward their recent purchase. "I want to know what our editorial policy will be. Do we condone the offenses of our grafters and spoilsmen by remaining silent regarding their crimes? Or do we expose them?"

"We will let their guilt expose and kill itself," quickly returned Carmen. "How? Well, you will see."

A few minutes later they entered the gloomy, dust-laden offices of the Express. Hitt's spirits sank again as he looked about him. But Carmen seemed to suffer no loss of enthusiasm. After a mental appraisal of the dingy, uninviting environment she exclaimed: "Well, one nice thing about this is that we don't have much to start with!"

Hitt reflected upon her cryptical remark, and then laughed.

Carlson joined them at this juncture. It was evident that the sale of his plant had removed a heavy load from his shoulders.

"My best reporter was out yesterday when you called," he said, addressing Hitt. "He—well, he was a little the worse for wear. But he's in now. Come into my office and I'll send for him."

In a few minutes a tall, boyish fellow responded to the

editor's summons. He must have been well under twenty, thought Hitt, marveling that so young a man should be regarded as Carlson's best news gatherer. But his wonder grew apace when the editor introduced him as Mr. Sidney Ames.

"Huh!" ejaculated Haynerd. "Know J. Wilton?"

The lad smiled pallidly, as he bent his gaze upon Carmen, and addressed his reply to her. "My governor," he said laconically.

"The deuce he is!" returned Haynerd, beginning to bristle.

Carlson dismissed the reporter, and turned to the curious group.

"The boy has the making of a fine newspaper man in him. Has something of his father's terrible energy. But he's doomed. Whiskey and morphine got him. He used to come down here before his father threw him out. I let him write little articles for the Express when he was barely sixteen years old; and they were mighty good, too. But he got mixed up in some scandal, and J. Wilton cut him off. The boy always did drink, I guess. But since his family troubles he's been on the straight road to the insane asylum. It's too bad. But you'll keep him, I suppose?"

"Certainly not!" replied Haynerd aggressively. "His father is no friend of mine, and—"

"We *shall* keep him," calmly interrupted Carmen. "His father is a *very* good friend of mine."

Carlson looked from one to the other quizzically. "H'm!" he mused. "Well," squinting over his glasses at the girl, "this surely is woman's era, isn't it?"

* * * * * *

A week later the Express, scarcely recognizable in its clean, fresh type and modest headlines, with its crisp news and well written editorials, very unostentatiously made its entry into the already crowded metropolitan field. Few noticed it. Adams picked it up and laughed, a short, contemptuous laugh. Fallom glanced over it and wondered. J. Wilton Ames, who had been apprised of its advent, threw it into the waste basket—and then drew it out again. He re-read the editorial announcing the policy of the paper. From that he began a careful survey of the whole sheet. His eye caught an article on the feminist movement, signed by Carmen Ariza. His lip curled, but he read the article through, and finished with the mental comment that it was well written. Then he summoned Willett.

"I want this sheet carefully watched," he commanded, tossing the paper to his secretary. "If anything is noticed that in any way refers to me or my interests, call my attention to it immediately."

The secretary bowed and departed. A moment afterward Henry Claus, nominal head of the great Claus brewing interests, was ushered in.

"We licked 'em, Mr. Ames, we licked 'em!" cried the newcomer, rushing forward and clasping the financier's hand. "The city council last night voted against the neighborhood saloon license bill! Lined up solidly for us! Fine, eh?"

"Yes," commented the laconic Ames. "Our aldermen are a very intelligent lot of statesmen, Claus. They're wise enough to see that their jobs depend upon whiskey. It requires very astute statesmanship, Claus, to see that. But some of our congressmen and senators have learned the same thing."

The brewer pondered this delphic utterance and scratched his head.

"Well," continued Ames, "have you your report?"

"Eh? Yes, sure, Mr. Ames. Here."

Ames studied the document. Then he looked severely at Claus. "Sales less than last month," he remarked dryly.

"It's the local option law what done it, Mr. Ames," replied the brewer apologetically. "Them women—"

"Bah! Let a few petticoats whip you, eh? But, anyway, you don't know how to market your stuff. Look here, Claus, you've got to encourage the young people more. We've got to get the girls and boys. If we get the girls, we'll get the boys easily enough. It's the same in the liquor business as in certain others, Claus, you've got to land them young."

"But, Mr. Ames, I can't take 'em and pour it down their throats!" expostulated the brewer.

"You could if you knew how," returned Ames. "Why, man! if I had nothing else to do I'd just like to devote myself to the sales end of the brewing business. I'd use mental suggestion in such a way through advertising that this country would drown in beer! Beer is just plain beer to you dull-wits. But suppose we convinced people that it was a food, eh? Advertise a chemical analysis of it, showing that it has greater nutriment than beef. Catch the clerks and poor stenographers that way. Don't call it beer; call it Maltdiet, or something like that. Why, we couldn't begin to supply the demand!"

"How would you advertise, Mr. Ames?"

"Billboards in every field and along all railroads and highways; boards in every vacant lot in every town and city in the country; electric signs everywhere; handbills; lectures—never thought of that, did you? And samples—why, I'd put samples into every house in the Union! I'd give away a million barrels of beer—and sell a hundred million as a result! But I'd work particularly with the young people. Work on them with litera-

ture and suggestion; they're more receptive than adults. The hypnotism that works through suggestive advertising, Claus, is simply omnipotent! How about your newspaper contracts?"

"We have all the papers, excepting the Express, Mr. Ames."

"The Express?" Ames laughed. "Well, that's a new venture. You can afford to pass it up. It's run by a college professor and a doll-faced girl."

"But, Mr. Ames, our advertising manager tells me that the publishers of the Express called a meeting of the managers of all the other city papers, to discuss cutting out liquor advertising, and that since then the rates have gone up, way up! You see, the example set by the Express may—"

"Humph!" grunted Ames. Then he began to reflect. An example, backed by absolute fearlessness—and he knew from experience that the publishers of the Express were without fear—well, it could not be wholly ignored, even if the new paper had no circulation worth the name.

"Mr. Ames," resumed the brewer, "the Express is in every newsstand in the city. All the boys are selling it. It's in every hotel, in every saloon, in every store and business house here. It's in the dives. It isn't sold, it's given away! Where do they get their money"

Ames himself wondered. And he determined to find out.

"Leave it to me, Claus," he said at length, dismissing the brewer. "I'll send for you in a day or so."

* * * * * *

It was well after midnight when the little group assembled in the dining room of the Beaubien cottage to resume their interrupted discussions. Hitt and Haynerd were the last to arrive. They found Doctor Morton eagerly awaiting them. With him had come, not without some reluctance, his prickly disputant, Reverend Patterson Moore, and another friend and colleague, Doctor Siler, whose interest in these unique gatherings had been aroused by Morton.

"I've tried to give him a résumé of our previous deductions," the latter explained, as Hitt prepared to open the discussion. "And he says he has conscientious scruples—if you know what that means."

"He's a Philistine, that's all, eh?" offered Haynerd.

Doctor Siler nodded genially. "I am like my friend, Reverend Edward Hull, who says—"

"There!" interrupted Morton. "Your friend has a life job molding the plastic minds of prospective preachers, and he doesn't want to lose the sinecure. I don't blame him. Got a wife and babies depending on him. He still preaches hell-fire and the resurrection of the flesh, doesn't he? Well, in that case

we can dispense with his views, for we've sent that sort of doctrine to the ash heap."

Reverend Moore opened his mouth as if to protest; but Hitt prevented him by taking the floor and plunging at once into his subject. "The hour is very late," he said in apology, "and we have much ground to cover. Who knows when we shall meet again?"

Carmen stole a hand beneath the table and grasped the Beaubien's. Then all waited expectantly.

"As I sat in my office this morning," began Hitt meditatively, "I looked often and long through the window and out over this great, roaring city. Everywhere I saw tremendous activity, frantic hurry, and nerve-racking strife. In the distance I marked the smoke curling upward from huge factories, packing houses, and elevators. The incessant seething, the rush and bustle, the noise, the heat, and dust, all spelled business, an enormous volume of human business—and yet, *not one iota of it contributed even a mite to the spiritual nature and needs of mankind!*

"I pondered this long. And then I looked down, far down, into the streets below. There I saw the same diversified activity. And I saw, too, men and women, rich and comfortable, riding along happily in their automobiles, with not a thought beyond their physical well-being. But, I asked myself, should they not ride thus, if they wish? And yet, the hour will soon come when sickness, disaster, and death will knock at their doors and sternly bid them come out. And then?"

"Just what I have sought to impress upon you whenever you advanced your philosophical theories, Doctor," said Reverend Moore, turning to Morton. The doctor glowered back at him without reply. Hitt smiled and went on.

"Now what should the man in the automobile do? Is there anything he *can* do, after all? Yes, much, I think. Jesus told such as he to seek first the kingdom of harmony—a demonstrable understanding of truth. The automobile riding would follow after that, and with safety. Why, oh, why, will we go on wasting our precious time acquiring additional physical sensations in motor cars, amusement parks, travel, anywhere and everywhere, instead of laboring first to acquire that real knowledge which alone will set us free from the bitter woes of human existence!"

"Jesus set us free, sir," interposed Reverend Moore sternly. "And his vicarious atonement opens the door of immortality to all who believe on his name."

"But that freedom, Mr. Moore, you believe will be acquired only after death. I dispute that belief strenuously. But let us

return to that later. At present we see mankind laboring for that which even they themselves admit is not meat. They waste their substance for what is not bread. And why? Because of their false beliefs of God and man, externalized in a viciously cruel social system: because of their dependence upon the false supports of *materia medica*, orthodox theology, man-devised creeds, and human opinions. Is it not demonstrably so?

"And yet, who hath believed our report? Who wants to? Alas! men in our day think and read little that is serious: and they reflect hardly at all upon the vital things of life. They want to be let alone in their comfortable materialistic beliefs, even though those beliefs rend them, rive them, rack and twist them with vile, loathsome disease, and then sink them into hideous, worm-infested graves! The human mind does not want its undemonstrable beliefs challenged. It does not want the light of unbiased investigation thrown upon the views which it has accepted ready-made from doctor and theologian. Again, why? Because, my friends, the human mind is inert, despite its seemingly tremendous material activity. And its inertia is the result of its own self-mesmerism, its own servile submission to beliefs which, as Balfour has shown, have grown up under every kind of influence except that of genuine evidence. Chief of these are the prevalent religious beliefs, which we are asked to receive as divinely inspired."

Doctor Morton glanced at Reverend Moore and grinned. But that gentleman sat stolid, with arms folded and a scowl upon his sharp features.

"Religion," continued Hitt, "is that which binds us to the real. Alas! what a farce mankind have made of it. And why? Because, in its mad desire to make matter real and to extract all pleasures from it, the human mind has tried to eliminate the soul."

"We have been having a bad spell of materialism, that's true," interposed Doctor Morton. "But we are progressing, I hope."

"Well," Hitt replied, "perhaps so. Yet almost in our own day France put God out of her institutions; set up and crowned a prostitute as the goddess of reason; and trailed the Bible through the streets of Paris, tied to the tail of an ass! What followed? Spiritual destitution. And in this country we have enthroned so-called physical science, and, as Comte predicted, are about to conduct God to the frontier and bow Him out with thanks for His provisional services. With what result? As our droll philosopher, Hubbard, has said, 'Once man was a spirit, now he is matter. Once he was a flame, now he is a candle-

stick. Once he was a son of God, now he is a chemical formula. Once he was an angel, now he is plain mud.' "

"But," exclaimed Reverend Moore, visibly nettled, "that is because of his falling away from the Church—"

"My friend," said Hitt calmly, "he fell away from the Church because he could not stagnate longer with her and be happy. Orthodox theology has largely become mere sentimentalism. The average man has a horror of being considered a namby-pamby, religiously weak, wishy-washy, so-called Christian. It makes him ashamed of himself to stand up in a congregation and sing 'My Jesus, I love Thee,' and 'In mansions of glory and endless delight.' What does he know about Jesus? And he is far more concerned about his little brick bungalow and next month's rent than he is about celestial mansions. And I don't blame him. No; he leaves religion to women, whom he regards as the weaker sex. He turns to the ephemeral wisdom of human science—and, poor fool! remains no wiser than before. And the women? Well, how often nowadays do you hear the name of God on their lips? Is He discussed in society? Is He ever the topic of conversation at receptions and balls? No; that person was right who said that religion 'does not rise to the height of successful gossip.' It stands no show with the latest cabaret dance, the slashed skirt, and the daringly salacious drama as a theme of discourse. Oh, yes, we still maintain our innumerable churches. And, though religion is the most vital thing in the world to us, we hire a preacher to talk to us once a week about it! Would we hire men to talk once a week to us about business? Hardly! But religion is far, far less important to human thought than business—for the latter means automobiles and increased opportunities for physical sensation."

"Well, Mr. Hitt," objected Doctor Siler, "I am sure this is not such a godless era as you would make out."

"No," returned Hitt. "We have many gods, chief of whom is matter. The world's acknowledged god is not spirit, despite the inescapable fact that the motive-power of the universe is spiritual, and the only action is the expression of thought.

"But now," he continued, "we have in our previous discussions made some startling deductions, and we came to the conclusion that there is a First Cause, and that it is infinite mind. But, having agreed upon that, are we now ready to admit the logical corollary, namely, that there can be but *one* real mind? For that follows from the premise that there is but one God who is infinite."

"Then we do not have individual minds?" queried Miss Wall.

"We have but the one mind, God," he replied. "There are not minds many. The real man reflects God. Human men reflect the communal mortal mind, which is the suppositional opposite of the divine mind that is God. I repeat, the so-called human mind knows not God. It never sees even His manifestations. It sees only its own interpretations of Him and His manifestations. And these it sees as mental concepts. For all things are mental. Could anything be plainer?"

"Well, they might be," suggested Doctor Siler.

Hitt laughed. "Well then," he said, "if you will not admit that all things are mental—including the entire universe—you certainly are forced to admit that your comprehension of things is mental."

"Agreed," returned the doctor.

"Then you will likewise have to admit that you are not concerned with *things*, but with your comprehension of things."

"H'm, well—yes."

"And so, after all, you deal only with mental things—and everything is mental to you."

"But—whence the human mind? Did God create it?" continued Doctor Siler. "Did He, Mr. Moore?"

"The Bible states clearly that He created *all* things," returned that gentleman a little stiffly.

"My friends," resumed Hitt very earnestly, "we are on the eve of a tremendous enlightenment, I believe. And for that we owe much to the so-called 'theory of suppositional opposites.' We have settled to our satisfaction that, although mankind believe themselves to be dependent upon air, food, and water for existence, nevertheless they are really dependent upon something vastly finer, which is back of those things. That 'something' we call God, for it is good. Matthew Arnold said that the only thing that can be verified about God is that He is 'the eternal power that makes for righteousness.' Very well, we are almost willing to accept that alone—for that carries infinite implications. It makes God an eternal, spiritual power, omnipotent as an influence for good. It makes Him the infinite patron, so to speak, of right-thinking. And we know that thought is creative. So it makes Him the sole creative force.

"But," he continued, "force, or power, is not material. God by very necessity is mind, including all intelligence. And His operations are conducted according to the spiritual law of evolution. Oh, yes, evolution is not a theory, it is a fact. God, infinite mind, evolves, uncovers, reveals, unfolds, His numberless eternal ideas. These reflect and manifest Him. The greatest of these is the one that includes all others and expresses and reflects Him perfectly. That we call man. That

is the man who was 'made'—revealed, manifested—in His image and likeness. There is no other image and likeness of God. Moreover, God has always existed, and always will. So His ideas, including real man, have had no beginning. They were not created, as we regard creation, but have been unfolded.

"All well and good, so far. But now we come to the peculiar part, namely, the fact that *reality seems always to have its shadow in unreality.* Every positive seems to have a negative. The magnet has its opposite poles, one positive, the other negative. Jesus had his Nero. Truth has its opposing falsities. At the lowest ebb of the world's morals appeared the Christ. The Christian religion springs from the soil of a Roman Emperor's blood-soaked gardens. And so it goes. Harmony opposed by discord. Errors hampering the solving of mathematical problems. Spirit opposed by matter. Which is real? That which stands the test of demonstration as to permanence, I say with Spencer.

"And now we learn that it is the *communal mortal mind* that stands as the opposite and negative of the infinite mind that is God, and that it is but a supposition, without basis of real principle or fact. It has its law of evolution, too, and evolves its types in human beings and animals, in mountain, tree, and stream. All material nature, in fact, is but the manifestation, or reflection, of this communal mortal mind.

"But, though God had no beginning, and will have no ending, this communal mortal mind, on the contrary, did have a seeming beginning, and will end its psuedo-existence. It seemingly began as a mental mist. It seemingly evolved form and became active. It seemingly evolved its universe, and its earth as its lower stratum. It made its firmament, and it gradually filled its seas with moving things that manifested its idea of life. Slowly, throughout inconceivable eons of time, it unrolled and evolved, until at last, through untold generations of stupid, sluggish, often revolting animal forms, it began to evolve a type of mind, a crude representation of the mind that is God, and manifesting its own concept of intelligence. That type was primitive man.

"Now what was this communal mortal mind doing? Counterfeiting divine mind, if I may so express it. Evolving crude imitative types. But types that were without basis of principle, and so they passed away—the higher forms died, the lower disintegrated. Aye, death came into the world because of sin, for the definition of sin is the Aramaic word which Jesus used, translated *'hamartio,'* which means 'missing the mark.' The mortal mind missed the mark. And so its types died. And so they still die to-day. Yes, sin came through Adam, for Adam is the name of the communal mortal mind.

"Well, ages and ages passed, reckoned in the human mind concept of time. The evolution was continually toward a higher and ever higher type. Why? The influence of divine mind was penetrating it. Paleolithic man still died, because he did not have enough real knowledge in his mortal mind to keep him from missing the mark. He probably had no belief in a future life, for he did not bury his dead after the manner of those who later manifested this belief. But, after the lapse of centuries, Neolithic man was found manifesting such a belief. What has happened? This: the mortal mind was translating the divine idea of immortality into its own terms and thus expressing it.

"Ages rolled on. The curtain began to rise upon what we call human history. The idea of a power not itself began to filter through the mist of mortal mind, and human beings felt its influence, the influence that makes for righteousness. And then, at last, through the mortal mind there began to filter the idea of the one God. The people who best reflected this idea were the ancient Israelites. They called themselves the 'chosen' people. Their so-called minds were, as Carmen has expressed it, like window-panes that were a little cleaner than the others. They let a bit more of the light through. God is light, you know, according to the Scriptures. And little by little they began to record their thoughts regarding their concept of the one God. These writings became sacred to them. And soon they were seeing their God manifested everywhere, and hearing His voice in every sound of Nature. And as they saw, they wrote. And thus began that strange and mighty book, the Bible, *the record of the evolution of the concept of God in the human mind.*"

"Do you mean to say that the Bible was not given by inspiration?" demanded Reverend Moore.

"No," replied Hitt. "This filtering process that I have been speaking about *is* inspiration. Every bit of truth that comes to you or me to-day comes by inspiration—the breathing in—of the infinite mind that is truth.

"And so," he went on, "we have those reflections of the communal mortal mind which we call the Israelites recording their thoughts and ideas. Sometimes they recorded plain fact; sometimes they wrapped their moral teachings in allegories and fables. Josephus says of Moses that he wrote some things enigmatically, some allegorically, and the rest in plain words, since in his account of the first chapter of Genesis and the first three verses of the second he gives no hint of any mystery at all. But when he comes to the fourth verse of the second chapter he says Moses, after the seventh day was over, began

to talk philosophically, and so he understood the rest of the second and third chapters in some enigmatical and allegorical sense. Quite so, it appears to me, for the writer, whoever he was, was then attempting the impossible task of explaining the enigma of evil, the origin of which is associated always with the dust-man."

"You deny the truth of the account of the creation as given in the second chapter of Genesis, do you?" asked Reverend Moore. "You deny that man was tempted and fell?"

"Well," said Hitt, smiling, "of course there is no special reason for denying that serpents may have talked, millions and millions of years ago. In fact, they still have rudimentary organs of speech—as do most animals. Perhaps they all talked at one time. Snakes developed in the Silurian Era, some twenty million years ago. In the vast intervening stretch of time they may have lost their power to talk. But, as for the second chapter of Genesis, Moses may or may not have written it. Indeed, he may not have written the first. We do not know. The book of Genesis shows plainly that it is a composite of several books by various authors. I incline to the belief that some more materialistic hand and mind than Moses's composed that second chapter. However that may be, it is a splendid example of the human mind's crude attempt to interpret the spiritual creation in its own material terms. It in a way represents the dawning upon the human mind of the idea of the spiritual creation. For when finite sense approaches the infinite it must inevitably run into difficulties with which it can not cope; it must meet problems which it can not solve, owing to its lack of a knowledge of the infinite principle involved. That's why the world rejected the first account of the creation and accepted the second, snake-story, dust-man, apple tree, and all."

"Hitt!" exclaimed Haynerd, his eyes wide agape. "You're like a story-book! Go on!"

"Wait!" interrupted Miss Wall. "We know that man appeared on this earth in comparatively recent times. For millions and millions of years before he was evolved animals and vegetables had been dying. Now was their death due to sin? If so, whose?"

"Assuredly," returned Hitt. "Your difficulty arises from the fact that we are accustomed to associate sin with human personality. But remember, the physical universe has been evolved from the communal mortal mind. It represents 'negative truth.' It has been dying from the very beginning of its seeming existence, for its seeming existence alone is sin. The vegetables, the animals, and now the men, that have been evolved from it, and that express it and reflect and manifest

it, must die, necessarily, because the so-called mind from which they evolve is not based upon the eternal, immortal principle, God. And so it and they miss the mark, and always have done so. You must cease to say, Whose sin? Remember that the sin is inherent in the so-called mind that is expressed by things material. The absence of the principle which is God is sin, according to the Aramaic word, translated *'hamartio,'* which Jesus used. The most lowly cell that swam in the primeval seas manifested the communal mortal mind's sin, and died as a consequence."

"In other words, it manifested a supposition, as opposed to truth?"

"Its existence was quite suppositional," replied Hitt. "It did not manifest life, but a material sense of existence. The subjective always determines the objective. And so the communal mortal mind, so-called, determined these first lowly material and objective forms of existence. They were its phenomena, and they manifested it. Different types now manifest it, after long ages. But all are equally without basis of principle, all are subject to the mortal law that everything material contains within itself the elements for its own destruction, and all must pass away. In our day we are dealing with the highest type of mortal mind so far evolved, the human man. He, too, knows but one life, human life, the mortal-mind sense of existence. His human life is demonstrably only a series of states of material consciousness, states of thought-activity. The classification and placing of these states of consciousness give him his sense of time. The positing of his mental concepts give him his sense of space. His consciousness is a thought-activity, externalizing human opinions, ideas, and beliefs, not based on truth. This consciousness—or supposititious human mind—is very finite in nature, and so is essentially self-centered. It attributes its fleshly existence to material things. It believes that its life depends upon its fleshly body; and so it thinks itself in constant peril of losing it. It goes further, and believes that there are multitudes of other human minds, each having its own human, fleshly existence, or life, and each capable of doing it and one another mortal injury. It believes that it can be deprived by its neighboring mortal minds of all that it needs for its sustenance, and that it can improve its own status at their expense, and vice versa. It is filled with fears—not knowing that God is infinite good—and its fears become externalized as disaster, loss, calamity, disease, and death at last. Perhaps its chief characteristic is mutability. It has no basis of principle to rest upon, and so it constantly shifts and changes to accord with its own shifting thought. There is

nothing certain about it. It is here to-day, and gone to-morrow."

"Pretty dismal state of affairs!" Haynerd was heard to mutter.

"Well, Ned," said Hitt, "there is this hope: human consciousness always refers its states to something. And that 'something' is real. It is infinite mind, God, and its infinite manifestation. The human mind still translates or interprets God's greatest idea, Man, as 'a suffering, sinning, troubled creature,' forgetting that this creature is only a mental concept, and that the human mind is looking only at its own thoughts, and that these thoughts are counterfeits of God's real thoughts.

"Moreover, though the human mind is finite, and can not even begin to grasp the infinite, the divine mind has penetrated the mist of error. There is a spark of real reflection in every mortal. That spark can be made to grow into a flame that will consume all error and leave the real man revealed, a consciousness that knows no evil. There is now enough of a spark of intelligence in the human, so-called mind to enable it to lay hold on truth and grow out of itself. And there is no excuse for not doing so, as Jesus said. If he had not come we wouldn't have known that we were missing the mark so terribly."

"Well," observed Haynerd, "after that classification I don't see that we mortals have much to be puffed up about!"

"All human beings, or mortals, Ned," said Hitt, "are interpretations by the mortal mind of infinite mind's idea of itself, Man. These interpretations are made in the human mind, and they remain posited there. They differ from one another only in degree. All are false, and doomed to decay. How, then, can one mortal look down with superciliousness upon another, when all are in the same identical class?"

Carmen's thoughts rested for a moment upon the meaningless existence of Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, who had anchored her life in the shifting sands of the flesh and its ephemeral joys.

"Now," resumed Hitt, "we will come back to the question of progress. What is progress but the growing of the human mind out of itself under the influence of the divine stimulus of demonstrable truth? And that is made possible when we grasp the stupendous fact that the human, mortal mind, including its man, is absolutely unreal and non-existent! The human man changes rapidly in mind, and, consequently, in its lower stratum, or expression, the body. For that reason he need not carry over into to-day the old, false beliefs which were manifested by him yesterday. If he leaves them in the past, they cease to be manifested in his present or future. Thus he

outgrows himself. Then, opening himself to truth, he lays off the 'old man' and puts on the 'new.' He denies himself—denies that there is any truth in the seeming reality of the mortal, material self—as Jesus bade us do."

"He must make new thoughts, then?" said Miss Wall.

"No," replied Hitt. "Thought is not manufactured. God is eternal mind. His ideas and the thoughts regarding them must always have existed. His thoughts are infinite in number. He, as mind, is an inexhaustible reservoir of thought. Now the human, mortal mind interprets His thoughts, and so *seems* to manufacture new thought. It makes new interpretations, but not new thoughts. When you hear people chatting, do you think they are manufacturing new thought? Not a bit of it! They are but reflecting, or voicing, the communal so-called mortal mind's interpretations of God's innumerable and real thoughts."

"And so," suggested Father Waite, "the more nearly correct our interpretations of His thoughts are, the nearer we approach to righteousness."

"Just so," returned Hitt. "There exist all sorts of real thoughts about God's ideas. And these are good and eternal. But the human mind makes likewise all sorts of erroneous translations of them. We shall solve our problem of existence when we correctly interpret His thoughts, and use them only. When the human mentality becomes attuned or accustomed to certain thoughts, that kind flow into it readily from the communal mortal mind. Some people think for years along certain erroneous or criminal lines. Their minds are set in that direction, and invite such a flow of thought. But were they to reverse the 'set,' there would be a very different and better resulting externalization in health, prosperity, and morals."

"I think I see," said Miss Wall. "And I begin to glimpse the true mission of Jesus, and why he was ready to give up everything for it."

"Yes. And now a word further about the so-called mortal mind. For, when we have collected and arranged all our data regarding it, we will find ourselves in a position to begin to work out of it, and thereby truly work out our salvation, even if with fear and trembling. I have said in a previous talk that, judging by the deductions of the physical scientists, everything seems about to leave the material basis and turn into vibrations, and 'man changes with velocity' of these. They tell us that all life depends upon water; that life began, eons ago, in the primeval sea. True, the human sense of existence, as I have said, began in the dark, primeval sea of mist, the deep and fluid mortal mind, so-called. And that sense of existence most

certainly is dependent upon the fluid of mortal mind. Bichât has said that 'life is the sum of the forces that resist death.' Spencer has defined life as the 'continuous adjustment of internal to external relations.' Very good, as applied to the human sense of life. The human mind makes multitudes of mental concepts, and then struggles incessantly to adjust itself to them, and at length gives up the struggle, hopelessly beaten. Scientists tell us that life is due to a continuous series of bodily ferments. The body is in a constant state of ferment, and that gives rise to life. Good! We know that the human mind is in a state of incessant ferment. The human mind is a self-centered mass of writhing, seething, fermenting material thought. And that fermentation is outwardly manifested in its concept of body, and its material environment. The scientists themselves are rapidly pushing matter back into the realm of the human mind. Bodily states are becoming recognized as manifestations of mental states—not vice versa, as has been ignorantly believed for ages. A prominent physician told me the other day that many a condition of nervous prostration now could be directly traced to selfishness. We know that hatred and anger produce fatal poisons. The rattlesnake is a splendid example of that. I am told that its poison and the white of an egg are formed of *exactly the same amounts of the same elements*. The difference in effect is the thought lying back of each."

"Well!" exclaimed Doctor Siler. "You don't pretend that the snake thinks and hates—"

"Doctor," said Hitt, "for thousands upon thousands of years the human race has been directing hatred and fear thoughts toward the snake. Is it any wonder that the snake is now poisonous? That it now reflects back that poisonous thought to mankind?"

"But some are not poisonous, you know."

"Can we say how long they have not been so, or how soon our hatred will make them all poisonous? Do you know, moreover, that sorrow, remorse, all emotions, in fact, affect the perspiration that exudes from the human body? Do you know that hatred will render human perspiration the deadliest poison known to science? I am told that in a few minutes of murderous hatred enough of this poisonous perspiration is exuded from the human body to kill a man. And do you know that the thought which manifests upon the body in such deadly poison is just as deadly when sent into the mentality of a human being? Think what the Church's deadly hatred of so-called heretics has done in the last nineteen hundred years! Why, millions have been killed by it alone! And in the name of Christ!

"But now," he said, consulting his watch, "I must go. Even a newspaper man requires a little sleep. And I must make my apology for occupying the floor to-night to the exclusion of you all. I have gradually been filling up with these thoughts for some weeks, and I had to let them out. Besides—"

"Mr. Hitt," interrupted Father Waite, "I shall soon be ready to report on those questions of Bible research which you assigned to me."

"Ah, yes," replied Hitt. "Well, have you found that Jesus really was an historical character, or not?"

"I think," said Carmen, "that he has found that it really matters little whether there ever was such a person as the human man Jesus. The Christ has always lived; and the Christ-principle which the man Jesus is reported to have revealed to the world is with us, here, now, and always. It is the principle, rather than the man Jesus, that concerns us, is it not?"

"Miss Carmen," interposed Reverend Moore, "Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, and your remarks concerning him are—"

"Slow up, Pat!" interrupted Doctor Morton. "I'll fight that out with you on the way home. Come, the meeting's adjourned."

"We will take up that question in our next discussion," said Hitt. "But, wait; Carmen must give us just a short song before we part."

The girl went immediately to the piano. As she passed Hitt, she squeezed his hand. A few minutes later the little group dispersed, with the melody of the girl's voice trembling in their souls.

CHAPTER 8

FOR several days Ames reflected, and waited. Judging by the data which he was able to secure, the Express was eating up money at a fearful pace. To continue at that rate meant certain financial disaster in the near future. And yet the publishers of the rejuvenated sheet seemed never to count the cost of their experiment. Already they had begun the introduction of innovations that were startling and even mirth-provoking to staid, conservative publishers in the journalistic field. To survive the long period necessary for the education of the public taste to such things as the Express stood for demanded a source of income no less permanent than La Libertad itself. But at this thought Ames chuckled aloud.

Then an idea occurred to him. The Beaubien, of course, in

her crippled financial condition was affording the Express no monetary assistance. Carmen had nothing. Haynerd's few thousands were long since dissipated. Hitt's income was measured. But—ah, Miss Wall! And her estate was handled by Ames and Company! And handled, we may add, in such a manner that Miss Wall knew naught regarding it, except that she might draw upon it as one dips water from a hillside spring.

Thus Ames reflected. And as he meditated upon the new paper and its promoters, there gradually formed within him a consuming desire to see again the fair young girl who had drawn him so strongly, despite his mountainous wrath and his flaming desire to crush her when she boldly faced him in his own house on the night of his grand reception. Why had he let her escape him then? He had been a fool! True, women had meant little to him, at least in the last few years. But this girl had seemed to stir within him new emotions, or those long slumbering. He knew not, coarsely materialistic as was his current thought, that in him, as in all who came within the radius of her pure affection, she had swept chords whose music he had never heard before.

Days passed, while Ames still mused. And then one morning he took down the receiver and called up the office of the Express.

No, Mr. Hitt was not there—but this was his assistant. And:

"You didn't want to see Mr. Hitt, did you? You wanted to see me. Well, you may come over."

Ames nearly dropped the receiver in his astonishment. In the first place, the girl had read his thought; and in the second, he was not accustomed to being told that he might go to see people—they came cringing to him.

"You may come at twelve-fifteen," continued the clear, firm voice. "And remain a half hour; I'm very busy."

Ames put down the instrument and looked about, thankful that no one was there to comment on his embarrassment. Then he leaned back in his chair and went slowly over in thought the experiences of that eventful night in his house. Why, this slip of a girl—a half-breed Indian at best—this mere baby—! But he glanced up at the great electric wall clock, and wished it were then twelve-fifteen.

* * * * * *

At noon Ames, jauntily swinging his light walking stick, strolled casually into the office of the Express. His air was one of supreme confidence in his own powers. He was superhuman, and he knew it. And the knowledge rendered him

unafraid of God, man, or beast. He had met and conquered everything mundane, excepting this young girl. But that thought was now delightful to him. In her he had unearthed a real novelty, a ceaseless interest. She reminded him of a beautiful kitten. She scratched and nettled him; but she was as nothing in his grasp.

The first thing that impressed him on entering the office was the air of prosperity which hung over the place. The environment, he mentally commented, was somewhat unusual for a newspaper plant. Order, quiet, and cleanliness were dominant notes in the prevailing harmony. He first walked back into the pressroom to see if the same conditions prevailed there. Then he retraced his steps, and at length came to a halt before a door bearing the inscription, "Miss Ariza," on the glass. Turning the knob, he peered curiously in.

The room was small, but light and airy. Its furnishings were new, and its walls had been freshly tinted. A few pictures of good quality hung about them. A handsome rug lay upon the floor. At the desk, bending over a new typewriter, sat Carmen.

"I beg pardon," said Ames, hesitating in the doorway.

The girl glanced up quickly. "Oh, come in," she said. "I was expecting you."

He entered and took the chair indicated. "You don't mind if I finish this article, do you?" she said, bending again to her work. "It's got to go to the compositors right away."

"Certainly—don't stop," replied Ames easily. "When we talk I want your undivided attention."

"Oh, you're sure to get it," she returned, laughing. And Ames wondered just what she meant.

He sat back in his chair and watched her closely. How wondrous fair she was! Yet, there was just a slight tint in her skin, he thought. Perhaps the report that she was a mulatto was not wholly unfounded, although the strain must have been greatly mixed. How simply she was dressed. He remembered her in her beautiful ball gown. He thought he preferred this. How rapidly her fingers sped over the keys. And what fingers! What a hand! He wanted to bend over and take it in his own. Then he suddenly remembered what the Beaubien had once told him—that she always seemed to be a better woman in this girl's presence. But—what changes had come since then! Could he go on persecuting the harassed woman? But he wouldn't, if—

"There!" said the girl, with what seemed to be a little sigh of relief. She pressed a button, and handed the typewritten sheets to the boy who responded. Then, turning to Ames:

"You've come to apologize, haven't you? But you needn't. I'm not a bit offended. I couldn't be, you know."

Apologize! Well, he certainly had not had any such intention when he came in. In fact, he knew not just why he was there.

"You see, Congressman Wales didn't vote for the unaltered schedule. And so everything's all right, isn't it?" she went on lightly.

Ames's face darkened. "No vote has been taken," he said, a dull anger rising within him.

"Oh, you are mistaken," replied the girl. "The bill was voted out of committee an hour ago. That's what I was writing up. Here's the wire, showing the alterations made. Mr. Wales voted for them."

Ames read the message, and handed it back. Beyond the clouding of his features he gave no indication of his feelings.

"So, you see," continued the girl, "that incident is closed—for all time, isn't it?"

He did not reply for some moments. Then:

"Rather odd, isn't it?" he commented, turning quite away from that subject, and glancing about, "that one with the high ideals you profess should be doing newspaper work."

"Just the contrary," she quickly returned. "There is nothing so practical as the ideal, for the ideal is the only reality."

"Well, just what, may I ask, are you trying to do here?" he continued.

"Run a newspaper on a basis of *practical* Christianity," she answered, her eyes dancing. "Just as all business will have to be conducted some day."

He leaned back and laughed.

"It is funny, isn't it?" she said, "to the carnal mind."

The laughter abruptly ceased, and he looked keenly at her. But there was no trace of malice in her fair face as she steadily returned the look.

"Has it paid yet?" he asked in a bantering tone.

"Splendidly!" she exclaimed.

"H'm! Well, I'll wager you won't get a dollar back on your investment for years."

"A dollar! No, nor perhaps a penny! We are not measuring our profits in money!"

"And your investment—let's see," he mused, trying to draw her out. "You've put into this thing a couple of hundred thousand, eh?"

She smiled. "I'll tell you," she said, "because money is the only measure you have for estimating the worth of our project. Mr. Hitt has put more than that amount already into the Express."

"Well! well! Quite a little for you people to lose, eh?"

"You will have to change your tone if you remain here, Mr. Ames," she answered quietly. "We talk only prosperity in this office."

"Prosperity! In the face of overwhelming debts! That's good!" he laughed.

She looked at him closely for a moment. "Debts?" she said in a low voice. "*You* speak of debts? You who owe your fellow-men what you can never, never repay? Why, Mr. Ames, there is no man in this whole wide world, I think, who is so terribly, hopelessly in debt as you!"

"I? My dear girl! Why, I don't owe a dollar to any man!"

"No?" she queried, bending a little closer to him. "You do not owe Madam Beaubien the money you are daily filching from her? You do not owe poor Mr. Gannette the money and freedom of which you robbed him? You do not owe anything to the thousands of miners and mill hands who have given, and still give, their lives for you? You do not owe for the life which you took from Mrs. Hawley-Crowles? You do not owe for the souls which you have debauched in your black career? For the human wreckage which lies strewn in your wake? You do not owe Mr. Haynerd for the Social Era which you stole from him?"

Ames remained rigid and quiet while the girl spoke. And when she had finished, and they sat looking squarely into each other's eyes, the silence was like that which comes between the sharp click of lightning and the crash of thunder which follows. If it had been a man who thus addressed him, Ames would have hurled him to the floor and trampled him. As it was, he rose slowly, like a black storm-cloud mounting above the horizon, and stood over the girl.

She looked up into his face dauntlessly and smiled. "Sit down," she quietly said. "I've only begun. Don't threaten, please," she continued. "It wouldn't do any good, for I am not a bit afraid of you. Sit down."

A faint smile began to play about Ames's mouth. Then he twitched his shoulders slightly. "I—I got up," he said, with an assumption of nonchalance, "to—to read that—ah, that motto over there on the wall." He went slowly to it and, stooping, read aloud:

> "Lift up the weak, and cheer the strong,
> Defend the truth, combat the wrong!
> You'll find no scepter like the pen
> To hold and sway the hearts of men."

"That was written by your Eugene Field," offered the girl. "Now read the one on the opposite side. It is your *Tekel Upharsin.*"

He went to the one she indicated, and read the spiritual admonition from Bryant:

"Leave the vain, low strife
That makes men mad—the tug for wealth and power—
The passions and the cares that wither life,
And waste its little hour."

"Now," continued the girl, "that is only a suggestion to you of the real handwriting on the wall. I put it there purposely, knowing that some day you would come in here and read it."

Ames turned and looked at her in dumb wonder, as if she were some uncanny creature, possessed of occult powers. Then the significance of her words trickled through the portals of his thought.

"You mean, I suppose," he said, "that if I am not persuaded by the second motto I shall feel the force of the first, as it sways you, eh?"

"I mean, Mr. Ames," she replied steadily, "that the world is entering upon a new era of thought, and that your carnal views and methods belong to a day that is past. This century has no place for them; it wearies of the things you represent; you are the epitome of that evil which must have its little hour of night before the reality dawns."

He regarded her intently for some moments. "Am I to understand," he asked, "that the Express, under its new management, is about to turn muck-raker, and shovel mud at us men of wealth?"

"We are not considering the Express now, Mr. Ames," she replied. "It is I alone who am warning you."

"Do Hitt and Haynerd bring against me the charges which you voiced a moment ago? And do you intend to make the columns of your paper spicy with your comments on my character and methods? I verily believe you are declaring war!"

"We are in the business of declaring truth, Mr. Ames," she said gently. "The Express serves all people. It will not shield you when you are the willing tool of evil, nor will it condone your methods at any price."

"War, eh? Very well," he replied with a bantering smile. "I came over here this noon to get the policy of your paper. I accept your challenge."

"Our challenge, Mr. Ames," she returned, "is the challenge which evil always finds in good. It is perpetual."

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "I like a good enemy, and an honest one. All right, marshal your forces. Who's your general, Hitt or Haynerd?"

"God," she answered simply.

For an instant the man was taken back. Then he recovered himself, and laughed.

"Do you know," he said, bending close to her, "I admire you *very* much. You are a splendid little fighter. Now let's see if we can't get together on terms of peace. The world hasn't used you right, and I don't blame you for being at odds with it. I've wanted to talk with you about this for some time. The pin-headed society hens got jealous and tried to kill you. But, if you'll just say the word, I'll set you right up on the very pinnacle of social prestige here. I'll take you by the hand and lead you down through the whole crowd of 'em, and knock 'em over right and left! I'll make you the leading woman of the city; I'll back the Express; we'll make it the biggest newspaper in the country; I'll make you and your friends rich and powerful; I'll put you in the place that is rightfully yours, eh? Will you let me?"

He was bending ever nearer, and his hand closed over hers when he concluded. His eyes were looking eagerly into her face, and a smile, winning, enticing, full of meaning, played about his lips. His voice had dropped to a whisper.

Carmen returned his smile, but withdrew her hand. "I'll join you," she said, "on one condition."

"Name it!" he eagerly cried.

"That you obey me."

"Well—and what does that mean?"

"Go; sell that thou hast; and give to the poor. Then come, take up the cross, and follow—my leader."

He straightened up, and a sneer curled his lips. "I suppose," he coarsely insinuated, "that you think you now have material for an illuminating essay on my conversation."

"No," she said gently. "It is too dark to be illuminating."

The man's facial muscles twitched slightly under the sting, but he retained his outward composure. "My dear girl," he said, "it probably has not occurred to you that the world regards the Express as utterly without excuse for existence. It says, and truly, that a wishy-washy sheet such as it, with its devitalized, strained, and bolted reports of the world's vivid happenings, deserves to go under from sheer lack of interest. The experiment has been tried before, and has signally failed. Money alone can keep your paper alive. But, say the word, and—"

"And your money, as well as your business ideals, will be ours?" she concluded for him.

He smiled and nodded.

"Mr. Ames," she said, "you have no ideals. No man who amasses millions by taking advantage of the world's inhuman

and pernicious social system can have ideals worthy of the name. To apply your methods, your thought, to the Express would result in sinking its moral tone into the dust. As for your money—"

"Commit suicide, then!" cried the man, yielding to his rising anger. "Let the Express go down, carrying you and your spineless associates with it! But, remember, you will be the sole cause of its ruin, and theirs!"

Carmen rose quietly and opened the office door. "Your half hour is up, Mr. Ames," she said, glancing at the little clock on her desk; "and I must return to my work."

For a moment the huge man stood looking down darkling upon the girl. He would have given his soul if he could have clasped that slender form in his arms! A sudden impulse assailed him, and bade him fall upon his knees before her, and ask her forgiveness and guidance. She stood waiting—perhaps just for that, and always with that same smile into which no one had ever yet read aught but limitless love.

The telephone bell rang sharply. Carmen hastened to answer the call.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hitt. Yes—yes—the cotton schedule was reported out quite changed—yes, an hour ago!"

When she looked up, she was alone.

* * * * * *

"Dearie," said the Beaubien at evening, as Carmen seated herself in that woman's lap and wound her arms about her neck, "I am afraid for you."

"Well, mother dearest," replied the girl, giving her a tighter squeeze, "that is a sheer waste of time. If you haven't anything more to occupy you than fear, you'd better come down to the office, and I'll set you to work."

"But—you have defied him—as he says, declared war—"

"No, dearest, not that. It is the carnal mind, using him as a channel, that has declared war against good. But evil is not power; nor has it been given power by God. My one thought is this: Am I doing that which will result in the greatest good to the greatest number? Am I loving my neighbor as myself? Serving as I would be served? Not as evil would want to be served, but as good. If my mental attitude is right, then God's law becomes operative in all that I do, and I am protected. Don't you see?"

"I know, dearie, but—there's the telephone! Oh, I do hope they don't want you!"

Carmen answered the call, and returned with the announcement that Haynerd was in distress. "Sidney Ames is—not there," she said. "He was to report a meeting. Mr. Haynerd wanted Lewis. Now don't worry, dearest; I—I won't go alone."

The girl had taken her coat and hat. A moment later she gave the Beaubien a kiss, and hurried out into the night. In half an hour she stood at Haynerd's desk.

"What are we going to do?" moaned that perturbed individual. "Here I am, tied down, depending on Sid, and he's drunk!"

"Well, I'm here. What's the assignment?"

Haynerd looked up at her, and hesitated. "Mass meeting, over on the East Side. Here's the address," taking up a slip of paper. "Open meeting, I'm told; but I suspect it's an I. W. W. affair. Hello!" he said, replying to a telephone call. "What's that? The Ames mills at Avon closed down this afternoon? What's reason? Oh, all right. Call me in an hour."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Carmen. "That's what this meeting is about," he said significantly. "Four thousand hands suddenly thrown out at the Avon mills. Dead of winter, too!"

Sidney Ames slouched into the editor's office and sank heavily into a chair. Haynerd gave a despairing gesture. "Look here," he said, in sudden desperation, "that fellow's got to be sobered up, now! Or else—"

Another call came, this time from the Beaubien. Father Waite had just come in. Could he take the assignment? Haynerd eagerly gave the address over the 'phone, and bade him start at once.

"Now," he said, nodding at Carmen, and jerking his thumb over his shoulder toward the intoxicated reporter, "it's up to you."

Carmen rose at once and went to the lad. "Come, Sidney," she said, taking his hand.

The boy roused dully, and shuffled stupidly after the girl into her own little office.

Carmen switched on the lights and closed the door. Then she went to the limp, emaciated form crumpled up in a chair, and sat down beside it.

"Sidney," she said, taking his hand, "there is but *one* habit —the habit of righteousness. That is the habit that you are going to wear now."

Outside, the typewriters clicked, the telephones tinkled, and the linotypes snapped. There were quick orders; men came and went hurriedly; but there was no noise, no confusion. Haynerd toiled like a beaver; but his whole heart was in his work. He had found his niche. Carmen's little room voiced the sole discordant note that night. And as the girl sat there, holding the damp hand of the poor victim, she thanked her

God that the lad's true individuality was His pure thought of him.

* * * * * *

At dawn Sidney Ames awoke. A rosy-tinted glow lay over the little room, and the quiet form at his side seemed an ethereal presence. A gentle pressure from the hand that still clasped his brought a return of his earthly sense, and he roused up.

"Miss Carmen! You—?"

"Yes, Sidney." The gentle voice sounded to him like distant music.

"I—you—you brought me in here last night—but—" His hands closed about the little one that lay in his grasp. "You—haven't sat here—with me—all night?"

"Yes, Sidney, all night."

With a low moan the boy buried his face in her arms, and burst into a flood of bitter tears.

"It isn't real, Sidney," she whispered, twining an arm about his neck. "It isn't real."

For some moments the lad sobbed out his shame and misery. Carmen stroked his fair hair, and drew him closer to her, while tears of love and pity coursed down her own cheeks.

Then, suddenly, the boy started up. "Don't touch me!" he cried, struggling to his feet, while his eyes shone with a wild light.

He started for the door, but Carmen darted past him and stood with her back against it, facing him. "Stop, Sidney!" she cried, holding her hands against him. "It can't drive you! It is powerless! *God reigns here!*"

She turned the lock as he hesitated; then took his arm and led him, trembling and shivering, back to his chair.

"We are going to meet this, Sidney, you and I," she whispered, bending over the shaking form.

The suffering lad shook his head and buried his face in his hands. "You can't," he moaned; "you can't—I'm *gone!*" His voice died into a tremble of hopeless despair, of utter surrender.

Carmen bit her lip. She had faced many trying situations in her brief life-experience; but, though she met it with dauntless courage and knew its source, the insidious suggestion now persisted that the eyes of her people were upon her, and that by this would stand or fall their faith. Aye, the world was watching her now, keen-eyed and critical. Would she give it cause to say she could not prove her faith by her works?

And then came the divine message that bade her "Know that I am God!"—that bade her know that responsibility lay not upon her shoulders, but upon the Christ for whom she was

now called to witness. To see, or permit the world to see, this mountainous error, this heaped-up evil, as real and having power, meant a denial of the Christ and utter defeat. It meant a weary retracing of her own steps, and a long night of spiritual darkness to those whose eyes had been upon her.

"Sidney," she said, turning to the sunken boy at her side, "you are right, the old man *is* gone. And now we are going to create 'new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind'—as thought. Underneath are the everlasting arms, and you have sunk down, down, down, until at last you rest upon them, and you find that you haven't sunk at all, and that you couldn't possibly get away from that infinite Love that is always drawing you to itself!"

She put her arm again about the lad, and drew him toward her. "Listen, Sidney dear, I am standing with you—and with me is omnipotent God! His arm is not shortened, that it can not save you from the pit of spiritual oblivion into which human thought would seem to make you think you had fallen, engulfed by the senses."

The boy raised his head and looked at her through his bloodshot eyes. "You don't know!" he whispered hoarsely; "you don't understand—"

"It is just because I *do* understand, Sidney, that I am able to help you," she interrupted quickly. "I understand it all."

"It—it isn't only whiskey—it's—" his head sank again—"it's—morphine! And—God! it's got me!"

"It's got the false thought that seems to call itself 'you,'" she said. "Well, let it have it! They belong together. Let them go. We'll cling to them no longer, but shake them off for good. For good, I said, Sidney—and that means, for *God!*"

"God?" he echoed. "I know no God! If there were a God, I shouldn't be where I am now."

"Then I will know it for you," she softly answered. "And you are now right where you belong, in Him. And His love is about you."

"Love!" He laughed bitterly. "Love! I never knew what it meant. My parents didn't teach it to their children. And when I tried to learn, my father kicked me into the street!"

"Then, Sidney, I'll teach you. For I am in the world just to show what love will do."

"My father—it's his fault—all his fault!" cried the boy, flaring up and struggling to rise. "God! I hate him—hate him! It's his fault that I'm a sot and a drug fiend!"

"It is hate, Sidney, that manifests in slavery, in sodden brains, and shaking nerves. You don't hate your father; the hate is against your thought of him; and that thought is all wrong. We're going to correct it."

"I used to drink—some, when I lived at home," the boy went on, still dwelling on the thoughts that held him chained. "But he could have saved me. And then I fell in love—I thought it was love, but it wasn't. The woman was—she was years older than I. When she left the city, I followed her. And when I found out what she was, and came back home, my father threw me out—cut me off—God!"

"Never mind, Sidney," the girl whispered. "It isn't true anyway." But she realized that the boy must voice the thoughts that were tearing his very soul, and she suffered him, for it uncovered to her the hidden sources of his awful malady.

"And then I drank, drank, drank!" he moaned. "And I lay in the gutters, and in brothels, and—then, one day, Carlson told me to come and work for him. He thought I could straighten up. And so I went to a doctor, and he—God curse him!—he injected morphine into my arm to sober me. And that taught me that I could drink all I wanted to, and sober up on morphine. But then I learned—I found—"

He stopped, and began to fumble in his pockets. His eyes became wilder as he searched.

"Where is it?" he cried, turning fiercely upon the girl. "Did you take it from me? Give it to me—*quick!*" He caught her wrist and twisted it painfully. His voice became a scream.

"God is everywhere!" flashed through the girl's thought. "I am not afraid to see evil seem to have power!" Then aloud: "I know what you are searching for, Sidney. Yes, I have it. Listen, and I will give it to you. You are searching for help. No, it isn't in morphine tablets. It is in love—right here—the Christ-principle, that is bigger far than the demons that seem to tear you! I have *all* power from God, and you, evil, *can not touch me!"*

The boy started at the ringing voice, and loosened his grasp. Then he sank back into his chair, shaking as with palsy.

"Sidney!" she cried, seizing his hand. "Rise, and stand with me! We don't have to struggle—we don't have to fight —we only have to *know.* All that you are wrestling with is the world-wide belief that there is a power apart from God! *There is none!* Any claim that there is such a power is a lie! I have proved it! You and I will prove it again! There is no power or intelligence in whiskey or morphine! I have been sent to help you! The Christ-principle will save you! There is nothing beyond its reach, not even your problem!

"It is a problem, that's all, Sidney," she went on, as he became calmer. "And I have the solution. Will you put yourself in my charge, in my care, and let me meet it for you?" She bent over him and looked eagerly into his drawn face.

"We are not going to fight," she continued. "We are not going to resist evil as the world does, and so make it real. I know, dear, just how pressing your need is. I know, and I understand. I know how awfully real it seems to you. But trust me, as I trust the Christ. For *victory is inevitable!*"

For a few moments they sat together, hand in hand. The boy seemed to have been stunned. Then Carmen rose. "Come," she said. "I am going to take you home with me. I am going to keep you right with me, right under my thought. I'm going to be the mirror, constantly with you, that reflects infinite love to you every moment. Come; your problem is mine now. The burden of proof rests upon me. Don't think of anything else now, excepting that God has your hand and is leading you."

She took his arm and drew him, unresisting, yet uncomprehending, to the door. As she opened it, she looked up into his face and smiled. The boy choked, and turned back.

"No!" she cried, shifting her grasp to his hand. "No; you are mine now! And I shall not turn you over to yourself again until the problem is solved!"

Hitt met them as they came out of the room. "Well," he said, "I've kept Madam Beaubien informed as well as I could. But she's been worried. Where are you going?"

"Home," she said simply. "We'll be back at three—perhaps."

* * * * * *

But at three that afternoon the Beaubien telephoned to Hitt that Carmen would not be down.

"She will not leave the boy," the woman said. "She holds him—I don't know how. And I know he is trying desperately to help her. But—I never saw any one stand as she does! Lewis is here, but he doesn't interfere. We're going to put a bed in his room, and Sidney will sleep there. Yes, I'll keep you informed. Tell Ned, won't you?"

Haynerd stormed; but the tempest was all on the surface. "I know, I know," he said, in reply to Hitt's explanation. "That boy's life is more to her than a million newspapers, or anything else in the universe just at present. She'll win! The devil can't look her in the face! I—I wish I were— What are you standing there for? Go 'long and get to work!"

In the little Beaubien cottage that afternoon the angry waves of human fear, of human craving, of hatred, wrath, and utter misery mounted heaven-high, and fell again. Upon them walked the Christ. As the night-shadows gathered, Sidney Ames, racked and exhausted, fell into a deep sleep. Then Carmen left his bedside and went into the little parlor, where sat the Beaubien and Father Waite.

"Here," she said, handing a hypodermic needle and a vial of tablets to the latter. "He didn't use them. And now," she continued, "you must work with me, and stand—firm! Sidney's enemies are those of his own mental household. It is our task to drive them out. We have got to uproot from his consciousness the thought that alcohol and drugs are a power. Hatred and self-condemnation, as well as self-love, voiced in a sense of injury, are other mental enemies that have got to be driven out, too. There is absolutely *no* human help! It is all mental, every bit of it! You have got to know that, and stand with me. We are going to prove the Christ-principle omnipotent with respect to these seeming things.

"But," she added, after a moment's pause, "you must not watch this error so closely that it can't get away. Don't watch it at all! For if you do, you make a reality of it—and then, well—"

"The case is in your hands, Carmen," said Father Waite gently. "We know that Jesus would cure this boy instantly, if he were here—"

"Well—the Christ *is* here!" cried the girl, turning upon him. "Put away your 'ifs' and 'buts.' Stand, and *know!*"

The man bowed before the rebuke. "And these," he said, holding out the needle and vial, "shall we have further use for them?"

"It will be given us what we are to do and say," she returned. "The case rests now with God."

CHAPTER 9

FOUR weeks from that crisp morning when Carmen led the bewildered, stupified lad to her home, she and Sidney sat out upon the little porch of the cottage, drinking in the glories of the winter sun. January was but half spent, and the lad and girl were making the most of the sudden thaw before the colder weather which had been predicted might be upon them.

What these intervening weeks had been to Carmen, none might have guessed as she sat there with the sunlight filtering in streamlets of gold through her brown hair. But their meaning to the boy might have been read with ease in the thin, white face, turned so constantly toward his fair companion. They were deeply, legibly written there, those black nights, when he would dash out into the hall, determined to break through the windows of the nearest dram shop and drink,

drink, drink, until the red liquor burst from his eyes, his mouth, his nostrils! Those ghastly nights, when Carmen would stand before him, her arms outspread across the door, and beat back the roaring devils within him! Those long days of agonized desire for the vicious drug which had sapped his manhood! Those fell hours, when low curses poured from his burning lips upon her and upon all mankind! Those cold, freezing sweats, and the dry, cracking fever! Those hours when, with Carmen always by his side, he tramped mile after mile through drifts and ice, until he dropped at length from sheer exhaustion, only to awake, hours later, to find that the girl had brought him home, safe, unharmed!—

And then, oh, the "Peace, be still!" which he began to hear, faint at first, but growing in volume, until, at last, it became a mighty, thunderous command, before which the demons paled and slunk away, never to return! Oh, the tears of agony that had given way to tears of joy, of thanksgiving! Oh, the weakness that had been his strength! And, oh, the devotion of this fair girl—aye, and of her associates, too—but all through her! Had she proved her God before the eyes of the world? That she had! Day after day, clad in the impenetrable armor of her love, she had stood at this struggling lad's side, meeting the arrows of death with her shield of truth! Night after night she had sat by his couch, her hand crushed in his desperate grasp, flouting the terror that stalked before his delirious gaze! What work she had done in those long weeks, none would ever know; but the boy himself knew that he had emerged from the valley of the shadow of death with a new mind, and that she had walked with him all the dark, cloud-hung way.

As they sat there in the bright sunlight that morning, their thought was busy with the boy's future. Old plans, old ambitions, had seemed to lift with the lifting of the mortal curse which had rested upon him, and upward through the ashes of the past a tender flower of hope was pushing its way. He was now in a new world. The last tie which bound him to his family had been severed by his own father two weeks before, when the shadow of death fell athwart his mother's brilliant path. Mrs. J. Wilton Ames, delicate in health when recalled from abroad, and still suffering from the fatigue of the deadly social warfare which had preceded her sudden flight from her husband's consuming wrath, had failed to rally from the indisposition which seized her on the night of the grand Ames reception. For days she slowly faded, and then went quickly down under a sharp, withering attack of pneumonia. A few brief weeks after the formal opening of the Ames palace its

mistress had sighed away her blasted hopes, her vain desires, her petty schemes of human conquest and revenge, and had gone to face anew her problems on another plane of mortal thought. It was rumored by the servants that, in her last hours, when she heard the rustle of the death angel's wings beside her, a great terror had stricken her, and she had called wildly for that son whom she had never cared to know. It was whispered that she had begged of her husband to seek the lad and lead him home; that she had pleaded with him to strive, with the boy, to find the better things of life; that she had begged him to warn and be warned of her present sufferings, as she lay there, stripped of every earthly aid, impoverished in heart, in soul, in mind, with her hands dusty and begrimed with the ashes of this life's mocking spoils. How true these rumors, none might say. What truth lay hidden in her mad ravings about the parentage of Carmen, and her confused, muttered references to Monsignor Lafelle, no one knew. But of those who stood about her bedside there was none who could gainsay the awed whisperings of the servants that this haughty leader of the great city's aristocracy had passed from this life into the darkness beyond in pitiable misery and terror.

The news of his mother's death had come at a time when the boy was wild with delirium, at an hour when Waite, and Hitt, and Carmen stood with him in his room and strove to close their ears against the shrieking of the demon that was tearing him. Hitt at once called up Willett, and asked for instructions. A few minutes later came the message that the Ames house was forever barred against the wayward son. And it was not until this bright winter morning, when the lad again sat clothed and in his right mind, that Carmen had gently broken the news to him.

"I never knew her," the boy had said at length, rousing from his meditations. "Few of the rich people's children know their parents. I was brought up by nurses and tutors. I never knew what it was to put my arms around my mother, and kiss her. I used to long to, at times. And often I would plan to surprise her by suddenly running into her arms and embracing her. But then, when I would see her, she was always so far away, so cold, so beautifully dressed. And she seldom spoke to me, or to Kathleen, until we were grown up. And by that time I was running wild. And then—then—"

"There!" admonished Carmen, reaching over and taking his hand. "That's in our little private cemetery, you know. The old error is dead, and we are not going to dig it up and rehearse it, are we?"

He smiled wanly. "I'm like a little baby," he said sadly.

"I'm just beginning to live. And you are my mother, the only one I've ever known."

Carmen laughed merrily. "Let me be your sister," she said. "We are so near of an age, you know."

He raised her hand to his lips. "You are my angel," he murmured. "My bright, beautiful angel. What would I have been without you!"

"Now, Sidney!" she warned, holding up a finger. "What have I told you so often that Jesus said? 'Of mine own self I can do nothing.' Nor can I, Sidney dear. It was—" her voice sank to a whisper—"it was the Christ-principle. It worked through him as a channel; and it worked through me."

"You're going to teach me all about that," he said, again pressing her hand to his lips. "You won't cast me adrift yet, will you, little sister?"

"Cast you adrift! Never, Sidney dear! Why, you're still mine, you know! I haven't given you back to yourself yet, have I? But now let's talk about your work. If you want to write, you are going to, and you are going to write *right*."

"And you, Carmen?" he asked, wondering.

"Back to the Express," she said lightly. "I haven't written a word for it now for a month. And how dear, funny old Ned has scolded!"

"You—you dropped everything—your work—all—for a poor, worthless hulk like me," he sighed. "I—I can't understand it. You didn't know me, hardly."

"Sidney dear," the girl replied. "It wasn't for you. It was for God. Everything I do is *'as unto Him.'* I would have done the same for anybody, whether I knew the person or not. I saw, not you, but the human need—oh, such a need! And the Christ-principle made me a human channel for meeting it, that is all. Drop my work, and my own interests! Why, Sidney, what is anything compared with meeting human needs? Didn't Jesus drop everything and hurry out to meet the sick and the suffering? Was money-making, or society, or personal desire, or worldly pleasure anything to him when he saw a need? You don't seem to understand that this is what I am here for—to show what love will do."

"No," he murmured. "I—I guess I know only the world's idea of love."

"And that is love's counterfeit, self-love, sentimentalism, sex-mesmerism, and all that," she added. "But now, back to your work again. You're going to write, write, write! My, but the world is hungry for *real* literature! Your yearning to meet that need is a sign of your ability to do it. But, remember, everything that comes to you comes from within.

You are, in fact, a miner; and your mine is your mind; and that is unlimited, for God is the only mind, infinite and omnipresent. Now you are going to mine that mind.

"Listen," she went on hurriedly. "Don't be afraid to be afraid. We never fear a real thing; we fear only our false thoughts of things. Always those thoughts are absolutely wrong, and we wake up and find that we were fearing only fear-thoughts themselves. Haven't you ever noticed it? Now destroy the chains of fear which limit your thought, and God will issue!

"Well," without waiting for his reply, "now you have reached that plane of thought where you don't really care for what the world has to offer you. You have ceased to want to be rich, or famous. You are not afraid to be obscure and poor. You have learned, at least in part, that the real business of this life lies in seeking good, in manifesting and expressing it in every walk, and in reflecting it constantly to your fellow-men. Having learned that, you are ready to live. Remember, there is no luck, no such thing as chance. The cause of everything that can possibly come to you lies within yourself. It is a function of your thought. The thought that you allow to enter your mentality and become active there, later becomes externalized. Be, oh, so careful, then, about your thought, and the basis upon which it rests! For, in your writing, you have no right to inflict false thought upon your credulous fellow-mortals."

"But," he replied, "we are told that in literature we must deal with human realities, and with things as they are. The human mind exists, and has to be dealt with."

"The human mind does not exist, Sidney, except as supposition. There are no human realities. The world still awaits the one who will show it things as they *really* are. Human realities, so-called, are the horrible, ghastly unrealities of carnal thought, without any basis of the divine Christ-principle. I know, we are told that the great books of the world are those which preserve and interpret its life. Alas! is it true greatness to detail, over and over again in endless recital, the carnal motives of the human mind, its passions and errors, its awful mesmerism, its final doom? Yes, perhaps, on one condition: that, like a true critic, you picture human concepts only to show their unreality, their nothingness, and to show how they may be overcome."

"But most books—"

"Ah, yes, most books are written only to amuse the dispirited human mind for a brief hour, to make it forget for a moment its troubles. They are literary narcotics; they are

sops to jaded appetites, that's all. A book, for example, that pictures an injured man discovering a great treasure, and then using it to carry out his schemes of revenge—well, what influence for good has such a work? It is only a stimulus to evil, Sidney. But had it shown him using that great wealth to bless his persecutors and turn them from their mesmerism to real life and good—"

"Such things don't happen in this world, Carmen."

"But they could, and should, Sidney dear. And they will, some day. Then will come the new literature, the literature of *good!* And it will make people think, rather than relieve them from the ennui of solid thought, as our present novels do. The intellectual palate then will find only insipidity in such books as pour from our presses now. The ability to converse glibly about authors who wallow in human unrealities will then no longer be considered the hall-mark of culture. Culture in that day will be conformity to truth."

The lad smiled at the enthusiastic girl. "Little sister," he said, "you are a beautiful idealist."

"But," came her quick reply, "are you not a living illustration of the practicability of my idealism, Sidney?"

The boy choked, and tears filled his eyes. Carmen stole an arm about him. "The most practical man who ever lived, Sidney dear, was Jesus. And he was the greatest idealist. He had ideas that differed very radically from other people's, but he did not hide them for fear of giving offense. He was not afraid to shock people with the truth about themselves. He tore down, yes; but he then reconstructed, and on a foundation of demonstrable truth. He was not afraid to defy the Rabbis, the learned, and the puffed-up. He did not bow abjectly before the mandarins and pedagogues. Had he done so, and given the people what they wanted and were accustomed to, they would have made him a king—and his mission would have been a dead failure!"

"And for that they slew him," returned the boy.

"It is the cowardly fear of slaughter, Sidney, that keeps people from coming out and standing for what they know to be right to-day. You are not one of those cravens."

"But the people who do that, Carmen, are called demagogues and muck-rakers!"

She laughed. "And the muck-rakers, Sidney, have made a sorry mess, haven't they? They destroy without ruth, but seldom, if ever, put forth a sane suggestion for the betterment of conditions. They traffic in sensationalism, carping criticism, and abuse. 'To find fault,' said Demosthenes, 'is easy, and in every man's power; but to point out the proper remedy is the

proof of a wise counselor.' The remedy which I point out, Sidney, is the Christ-principle; and all I ask is that mankind seek to demonstrate it, even as Jesus bade us do. He was a success, Sidney, the greatest success the world has ever known. And why? Because he followed ideals with utter loyalty—because he voiced truth without fear—because he made his business the service of humanity. He took his work seriously, not for money, not for human preferment, but for mankind. And his work bears the stamp of eternity."

"I'm afraid—" he began.

"You're *not* afraid, Sidney!" the girl quickly interrupted. "Oh, why does the human mind always look for and expect that which it does not want to see come or happen!"

The boy laughed heartily at the quick sally of her delightfully quotidian thought. "You didn't let me finish," he said. "I was going to say that I'm afraid if I write and speak only of spiritual things I shall not be understood by the world, nor even given a hearing."

"Well, don't use that word 'afraid.' My! how the human mind clings to everything, even words, that express its chief bogy, fear."

"All right; I accept the rebuke. But, my question?"

"That was the case with Jesus. And yet, has anything, written or spoken, ever endured as his spiritual teachings? The present-day novel or work of fiction is as fleeting as the human thought it attempts to crystallize. Of the millions of books published, a handful endure. Those are they which illustrate the triumph of good over evil in human thought. And the greatest of such books is the Bible."

"Well, I'm hunting for a subject now."

"Don't hunt. Wait—and *know!* The subject will then choose you. It will pelt you. It will drive you to the task of transcribing it. Just as one is now driving me. Sidney—perhaps I can give you the subject! Perhaps I am the channel for this, too!"

He looked at her inquisitively. "Well," bending over closer to her, "what is it, little sister?"

The girl looked out over the dripping shrubs and the soft snow. But her thought was not there. She saw a man, a priest, she knew not where, but delving, plodding, digging for the truth which the human mind has buried under centuries and centuries of material *débris*. She saw him, patiently bearing his man-made burden, striving to shield a tender, abandoned girl, and to transfer to her his own great worldly knowledge, but without its dross. She saw the mighty sacrifice, when the man tore her from himself, and thrust her out be-

yond the awful danger in which he dwelt. She understood now. The years had taught her much. It was love—aye, the love that alone makes men great, the love that lays down human life in self-immolating service.

She turned to the waiting lad. "You will write it, Sidney? I will tell you the whole beautiful story. It is an illustration of the way love works through human channels. And perhaps—perhaps, some day, the book may reach him—yes, some day. And it will tell him—oh, Sidney, it will tell him that I know, and that I love him, love him, love him!"

* * * * * *

In the office of the manager of the Express three heads were close together that morning, and three faces bore outward evidence of the serious thought within.

"Miss Wall tells me, Ned," Hitt was saying, "that her father used to be associated with Ames, and that, at his demise, he left his estate, badly entangled, for Ames to settle. Now it transpires that Ames has been cunning enough to permit Miss Wall to draw upon his bank almost without limit, he making up any deficit with his own personal notes."

"Ah!" commented Haynerd. "I think I see the shadow of his fine hand!"

"And now," resumed Hitt, "she is given to understand that Ames has been obliged by the bank examiner to withdraw his personal notes as security for her deficits, and that the revenue from her estate must be allowed to accrue to the benefit of the Ames bank until such time as all obligations are met."

"Beautiful!" ejaculated Haynerd. "In other words, Elizabeth is simply cut off!"

"Just so. And now, another thing: Madam Beaubien's lawyer called on her to-day, and informed her that Hood had gone into court and secured an injunction, tying up all revenue from her estate until it can be unraveled. That cuts off her income, likewise."

Haynerd whistled. "The hound!" he ejaculated. "Ames is out to do up the Express, eh?"

"There is no doubt of it, Ned," returned Hitt seriously. "And to utterly ruin all connected with it."

"Then, by God, we'll fight him to the last ditch!" cried the excited Haynerd.

"I think you forget, Ned, that we have a lady with us," nodding toward Miss Wall, "and that you are seriously trying to reform, for Carmen's sake."

"I beg your pardon, Elizabeth," said Haynerd meekly. "I really am trying to be decent, you know. But when I think of Ames it's like a red rag to a bull!"

Miss Wall laughed. "Never mind, Ned. I admire your fighting spirit."

"Of course," Hitt continued, "oil still flows from our paternal wells. But in order to raise money at once I shall be obliged either to sell my oil holdings or mortgage them. They have got to take care of us all now, including Madam Beaubien."

"Where's Carmen?" asked Haynerd suddenly.

"Home, with Sidney. There's another anomaly: while Ames is trying to ruin us, that girl is saving his son. Great world, isn't it?"

"It's a hell of a world!" cried Haynerd. "I—I beg your pardon, Elizabeth. The fact is, either you or I will have to retire from this meeting, for I'm getting mad. I—I may say things yet!"

"Say anything you want to, Ned. I like to hear your sulphurous language to-day. It helps to express my own feelings," replied the woman.

"The circulation of the Express," Hitt went on, "is entirely artificial. Our expense is tremendous, and our revenue slight. And still Carmen insists on branching out and putting into practical form her big ideas. Limitation is a word that is not in her vocabulary!"

"Hitt, can't we fight Ames with his own fire? What about that Wales affair?"

"Ames is very cunning," answered Hitt. "When he learned that the cotton schedule had been altered in the Ways and Means Committee, he promptly closed down his Avon mills. That was to scare Congress. Then he resumed, but on half time. That was a plea of distress. I presume he will later return to full time, but with a reduced scale of wages. He's trying to coerce Congress. Now how does he intend to do it? This way: he will force a strike at Avon—a February strike—four thousand hands out in the cold. Meantime, he'll influence every other spinner in the country to do likewise. They'll all follow his lead. Now, can Congress stand up against that sort of argument? And, besides, he will grease the palms of a large number of our dignified statesmen, you may be sure!"

"Mr. Hitt," said Miss Wall, "I suggest that you send Carmen to Avon at once. I know of no one who can get to the bottom of things as she can. Let her collect the facts regarding the situation down there, and then—"

"Send her first to Washington!" interrupted Haynerd. "Have her hang around the lobbies of the Capitol for a while, and meet a lot of those old sap-heads. What information she won't succeed in worming out of them isn't in 'em, that's all!"

"But," objected Hitt, "if she knew that we would use her information for a personal attack upon Ames, she'd leave us."

"There's no objection to her getting the facts, anyway, is there?" demanded Haynerd, waxing hot again.

"N—no, I suppose not. But that will take additional money. Very well, I'll do it. I'll put a mortgage on my Ohio holdings at once."

"I don't think I would be afraid," suggested Miss Wall. "We might not use the information Carmen may collect in Avon or Washington, but something, I am sure, is bound to come out of it. Something always comes out of what she does. She's the greatest asset the Express has. We must use her."

"All well and good," put in Haynerd. "And yet, if she finds anybody down there who needs help, even the President himself, she'll throw the Express to the winds, just as she did in Sidney's case. You can't bank on her!"

"No, that's true, Ned, for while we preach she's off somewhere practicing. We evolve great truths, and she applies and demonstrates them. But she has saved Sidney—her Christ did it through her. And she has given the lad to us, a future valuable man."

"Sure—if we are to *have* any future," growled Ned.

"See here," retorted Hitt, brindling, "have we in our numerous gatherings at Madam Beaubien's spoken truth or nonsense? If you believe our report, then accept and apply it. Now who's to go to Avon with Carmen?"

"Sidney," suggested Miss Wall.

"Sid?" exclaimed Haynerd. "Huh! Why, if those Magyars down there discovered he was Ames's son, they'd eat him alive!"

The telephone rang. Hitt answered the call. Then, turning to his companions:

"Waite says he wants a meeting to-night. He'd like to report on his research work. Guess we'd better call it. I'll inform Morton. No telling when we may get together again, if the girl—" He became suddenly silent, and sat some time looking vacantly out through the window.

"She goes to Avon to-morrow," he abruptly announced, "alone." His thought had been dwelling on that 'something not ourselves' which he knew was shielding and sustaining the girl.

CHAPTER 10

"WE have now arrived at a subject whose interest and significance for us are incalculable," said Father Waite, standing before the little group which had assembled in their usual meeting place in the first hours of the morning, for only at that time could Hitt and Haynerd leave the Express. "We have met to discuss briefly the meaning of that marvelous record of a whole nation's search for God, the Bible. As have been men's changing concepts of that 'something not ourselves that makes for righteousness,' so have been individuals, tribes, and nations. The Bible records the development of these concepts in Israel's thought; it records the unquenchable longings of that people for truth; it records their prophetic vision, their sacred songs, their philosophy, their dreams, and their aspirations. To most of us the Bible has long been a work of profound mystery, cryptical, undecipherable. And largely, I now believe, because we were wont to approach it with the bias of preconceived theories of literal, even verbal, inspiration, and because we could not read into it the record of Israel's changing idea of God, from a wrathful, consuming Lord of human caprice and passions, to the infinite Father of love, whom Jesus revealed as the Christ-principle, which worked through him and through all who are gaining the true spiritual concept, as is this girl who sits here on my right with the lad whom you have seen rescued by the Christ from the pit of hell."

His voice choked when he referred to Carmen and Sidney. But he quickly stifled his emotion, and went on:

"In our last meeting Mr. Hitt clearly showed us how the so-called human mind has seemed to develop as the suppositional opposite of the mind that is God; and how through countless ages of human reckoning that pseudo-mind has been revealing its various types, until at length, rising ever higher in the scale of being, it revealed its human man as a mentality whose consciousness is the suppositional activity of false thought, and which builds, incessantly, mental concepts out of this kind of thought and posits them within itself as material objects, as its own body, its universe, its all. And he showed us how, little by little, that human mind's interpretations of the infinite mind's true ideas became better, under the divine infiltration of truth, until at last there developed a type, now known to us as the Jewish nation, which caught a clearer glimpse of truth, and became conscious of that 'something

not ourselves' which makes for right-thinking, and consequent correct mental concepts and externalizations. This, then, was the starting point of our religion. These first glimpses of truth, and their interpretations, as set forth in the writings of the early Jewish nation, constitute the nucleus of our Bible.

"But were these records exact statements of truth? Not always. The primitive human mind could only lisp its wonderful glimpses of truth in legend and myth. And so in fable and allegory the early Israelites sought to show the power of good over evil, and thereby stimulate a desire for right conduct, based, of course, on right-thinking. And thus it is that the most significant thing in their sacred records is their many, many stories of the triumph of the spiritual over the material.

"Time passed. The Hebrew nation waxed prosperous. Their right-thinking became externalized outwardly in material abundance and physical comfort. But the people's understanding was not sufficiently great to shield them from the temptation which material wealth and power always constitute. Their vision gradually became obscured. The mist of materialism spread over it. Those wonderful flashes of truth ceased to dart across their mental horizon. Their god became a magnified concept of the human man, who dickered with them over the construction of his temples, and who, by covenants, bribes, and promises, induced them to behave themselves. Prophecy died. And at length the beautiful vision faded quite away.

"Then followed four hundred human years, during which the vicissitudes of the Hebrew nation were many and dark. But during those long centuries there developed that world wonder, a whole nation's united longing for a deliverer! The prophets promised a great change in their fallen fortunes. Expectation grew keen. Desire expanded into yearning. Their God would not forsake them. Was not His grace sufficient? Though their concept of Him had grossly degenerated, yet the deliverer would come, he *must!*

"And he did. In the depths of their night—in the midst of the heaviest darkness that ever lay over the world—there arose a great light. Through the densest ignorance of the human mind filtered the Christ-principle, and was set forth by the channel through which it came, the man Jesus.

"What had happened? Had there been a conference among God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to debate the sending of salvation to mankind, as recorded by the poet Milton? Alas! what a crude, materialistic conception. Had God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son? But God *is* Love, infinite, unchanging. And His unique Son, the Christ-principle, available to all mankind, was 'before Abraham.' Had a great,

dimly perceived principle been demonstrated, namely, that, if we yearn long and earnestly for the right, it comes? Had the Jewish nation 'demonstrated' the Christ? Had their centuries of looking and expecting resulted in a saviour being manifested to them? It was a period in the unfolding of human thought when civilization had reached its lowest depths. Morality had evaporated to the dregs. Rome was become the world's harlot. A few years more, and Nero would drag his vulpine immorality across the stage. Paganism was virtue in comparison with the lust of men in that dark hour. And yet, in the very midst of it, appeared the most venerated, the most beloved man in all history, bearing the Christ-message like a flaming torch!

" 'Always our being is descending into us,' said Emerson. But our true being can be none other than infinite mind's idea of itself. Our true individuality must be the way that mind regards us. And thus it was that Israel's true being descended, filtering in through the thick mists of error. That true being was the deliverer, *par excellence,* for it was the message of truth that bade men deny themselves, their carnal selves, and know but the one God, infinite mind. That was the grace sufficient for them, that would have solved their problems, that would have enabled them to lay off the 'old man' and his woes and afflictions, and put on the 'new man,' divine mind's image. But the carnal mind sought a material kingdom. It wanted, not spirit, but matter. It cruelly rejected the message bearer, and sought to kill his message by slaying him on the cross. And thereby the Jewish nation rent itself asunder, and sank into carnal oblivion. Ah, how they have been cursed by the crucifixion of Jesus!

"Men ask to-day: Did Jesus really live? Or is he a mythical character, like the gods of pagan Rome? Let us ask, in making our reply, how truth comes to mankind? Is it not always through some human channel? Then the great sayings attributed to Jesus at least came from a human being. Let us go further: it is the common history of mankind that truth comes to the human mind only after a period of preparation. Not conscious preparation, necessarily, but, rather, a preparation forced by events. The truth of a mathematical principle can not come to me unless I am prepared to receive it. And the greatest good comes to men only after they have learned the nothingness of the material ambitions and aims which they have been pursuing. By its own rottenness the world had been made fallow for truth. The awfulness of its own exposure in its rampant, unlicensed revels, had shown as never before the human mind's absolute nothingness—its nothingness as regards real value, permanence, and genuine good

—in that first century of our so-called Christian era. And when the nothingness of the carnal mind was made plain, men saw the reality of the truth, as revealed in the Christ, back of it all. The divine message was whispered to a human mentality. And that mentality expanded under the God-influence, until at last it gave to the sin-weary world the Christ-principle of salvation. Let us call that human mentality, for convenience, the man Jesus.

"And now, was he born of a virgin? Impossible! And yet —let us see. It was common enough in his day for virgins to pretend to be with child by the Holy Ghost; and so we do not criticise those who refuse to accept the dogma of the virgin birth. But a little reflection in the light of what we have been discussing throws a wonderful illumination upon the question. If matter and material modes are real, then we must at once relegate the stories of the virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection, and the ascension to the realm of myth. If the so-called laws of matter are real, irrefragable laws, then we indulgently pass by these stories as figments of heated imaginations. But, regarding matter as a human, mortal concept, entirely mental, and wholly subject to the impress and influence of mind, and knowing, as we do now, that *mental concepts change with changed thought,* we are forced to look with more favor upon these questions which for centuries caused men to shed their fellows' blood.

"Mr. Hitt pointed out in our last meeting that mortal beings are interpretations in mortal or human mind of the infinite mind, God, and its ideas. The most perfect human interpretation of God's greatest idea, Man, was Christ Jesus. The *real* selfhood of every one of us is God's idea of us. It is spiritual, mental. The world calls it the 'soul,' the 'divine essence,' and the 'immortal spark.' The Christ was the real, spiritual selfhood of the man Jesus. So the Christ is the real selfhood of each of us. It is not born of the flesh. It is not conceived and brought forth in conformity with human modes. Now was this great fact externalized in the immaculate conception and birth? It does not grow and decay and pass away in death. It is the 'unique' Son of God which is back of each one of us. But the world has seen it only once in its fullness, and then through the man Jesus.

"Something happened in that first century of the so-called Christian era—something of tremendous significance. What was it? It was the birth of the Christ-idea into the human consciousness. Was the Christ-idea virgin-born? Aye, that it was, for God, infinite Mind, alone was its origin and parent. The speculation which has turned about that wonderful first

century event has dealt with the human channel through which the Christ-idea flowed to mankind. But let us see what light our deductions throw even upon that.

"Referring all things to the realm of the mental, where we now know they belong, we see that man never fell, but that Israel's idea of God and man did fall, woefully. We see that the Christ-principle appeared among men; we see that to-day it works marvels; we must admit that throughout the ages before Jesus it had done so; we know now that the great things which Israel is recorded to have done were accomplished by the Christ-principle working through men, and that when their vision became obscured they lost the knowledge of that principle and how to use it. History records the working of great deeds by that same Christ-principle when it was re-born in our first century; and we also can see how the obscuring of the spiritual by the material in the Emperor Constantine's time caused the loss of the Church's power to do great works. We are forced to admit the omnipotence, immanence, and eternality of the Christ-principle, for it is divine mind, God himself. Moses, Elisha, Elijah, the ancient prophets, all had primitive perceptions of truth, and all became channels for the passing of the Christ-principle to mankind in some degree. But none of these men ever illustrated that principle as did the man Jesus. He is the most marvelous manifestation of God that has ever appeared among mankind; so true and exact was the manifestation that he could tell the world that in seeing him they were actually seeing the Father. It is quite true that many of his great sayings were not original with him. Great truths have been voiced, even by so-called pagans, from earliest times. But he demonstrated and made practical the truth in these sayings. And he exposed the nothingness of the human mental concept of matter by healing disease, walking the waves, and in other wonderful ways. It is true that long before his time Greek philosophers had hit upon the theory of the nothingness of matter. Plato had said that only ideas were real. But Jesus—or the one who brought the Christ-message—was the clearest mentality, the cleanest human window-pane, to quote Carmen, that ever existed. Through him the divine mind showed with almost unobscured fullness. God's existence had been discerned and His goodness proved from time to time by prophets and patriarchs, but by no means to the extent that Jesus proved it. There were those before him who had asserted that there was but one reality, and that human consciousness was not the real self. There were even those who believed matter to be created by the force of thought, even as in our own day. *But it remained for Jesus to make those ideas*

intensely practical, even to the overcoming and dissolution of his whole material concept of the universe and man. And it remained for him to show that the origin of evil is in the lie about God. It was his mission to show that the devil was 'a man-killer from the beginning,' because it is the supposition that there is power apart from God. It was his life purpose to show mankind that there is nothing in this lie to cause fear, and that it can be overcome by overcoming the false thought which produces it. By overcoming that thought he showed men the evanescent nature of sickness and death. And sin he showed to be a missing of the mark through lack of understanding of what constitutes real good.

"Turn now again to the Bible, that fascinating record of a whole people's search for God and their changing concept of Him. Note that, wherever in its records evil seems to be made real, it is for the purpose of uncovering and destroying it by the vigorous statements of truth which you will almost invariably find standing near the exposition of error. So evil seemed very real in the first century of our era; but it was uncovered by the coming of Jesus. The exposure of evil revealed the Christ, right at hand."

"But," protested Haynerd, "let's get back to the question of the virgin birth."

"Very well," replied Father Waite. "But let us first consider what human birth is."

"Now there!" exclaimed Haynerd. "Now you are touching my lifelong question. If I am immortal, where was I before I was born?"

"Of which 'I' are you speaking, Ned?" asked Father Waite. "The real 'I' is God's image and likeness, His reflection. It was never born, and never dies. The human 'I' had a beginning. And therefore it will cease to be. The human mind makes its own laws, and calls them laws of nature, or even God's laws. And it obeys them like a slave. Because God is both Father and Mother to His children, His ideas, the human mind has decreed in its counterfeiting process that it is itself both male and female, and that the union of these two is necessary in order to give rise to another human mind. Do you see how it imitates the divine in an apish sort of way? And so elements of each sex-type of the human mind are employed in the formation of another, their offspring. The process is wholly mental, and is one of human belief, quite apart from the usage of the divine Mind, who 'spake and it was done,' mentally unfolding a spiritual creation. The real 'you,' Ned, has always existed as God's idea of Himself. It is spiritual, not material. It will come to light as the material 'you' is put off. The material

'you' did not exist before it was humanly born. It was produced in supposition by the union of the parent human minds, which themselves were reflections of the male and female characteristics of the communal mortal mind. It thus had a definite, supposititious beginning. It will therefore have a definite end."

"And so I'm doomed to annihilation, eh? That's a comforting thought!"

"Your mortal sense of existence, Ned, certainly *is* doomed to extinction. That which is supposition must go out. Oh, it doubtless will not all be destroyed when you pass through that change which we call death. It may linger until you have passed through many such experiences. And so it behooves you to set about getting rid of it as soon as possible, and thus avoid the unpleasant experience of countless death-throes. You see, Ned, an error in the premise will appear in the conclusion. Now you are starting with the premise that the human 'you' is real. That premise is not based upon fact. Its basis is rank error. All that you reflect of divine mind will endure permanently, but whatever you reflect of the lie regarding that mind will pass away. Human beings know nothing of their origin, nor of their existence. Why? *Because there is nothing to know about them; they are entirely supposititious!* Paul says, in his letter to the Romans: 'They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.' The birth of the children of the flesh is wholly a human-mind process. The infant mentality thus produced knows nothing whatsoever of itself. It has no knowledge; is not founded on truth. It will later manifest hereditary beliefs, showing the results of prenatal mesmerism. Then it will receive the general assortment of human thought and opinion—very little of it based on actual truth—which the world calls education. Then it learns to regard itself as an individual, a separate being. And soon it attributes its origin to God. But the prenatal error will appear in the result. The being manifests every gradation of human thought; it grows; it suffers and enjoys materially; it bases its very existence upon matter; it manifests the false activity of human thought in material consciousness; and then it externalizes its beliefs, the consentaneous human beliefs, upon its body and in its environment; and finally, the activity of the false thought which constitutes its consciousness ceases—and the being dies. Yes, its death will be due to sin, to *'hamartio,'* missing the mark. It never knew God. And that, Ned, is human life, so-called.

"Death is not in any sense a cessation of life. The being who dies never knew what it was to live. Death is the exter-

nalization of human, mortal beliefs, which are not based upon real knowledge, truth. And so, human birth is itself death. Paul said: 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.' In other words, mankind are striving terribly, desperately, to keep alive a sense of material, fleshly existence. But they can't do it. They are foredoomed to failure, despite the discovery of antitoxins. In the book of Job we read: 'The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' Where, then, is the reality in prenatal mesmerism and the drag of heredity? It is all supposition, all a part of the one lie, the 'man-killer.'

"The change called death comes to all mortals. It is the culmination of the human mind's sense of limitation. It does not usher them into immortal, illimitable bliss. It but leaves them upon another seeming plane of mortal thought, there to drag out another sense of existence, unless they have so learned the lesson which Jesus taught as to enable them to overcome death. It will not be overcome for us. That is our work. We have been shown how to do it. Why, then, do we waste our time in trivial things; in the heaping up of useless money; in the vain strife for sensual pleasures? The mortal will live and die, and live and die, until at last he is beaten into line and forced to demonstrate the Christ-principle. Hadn't we better begin that right here and now? Wishing to die doesn't solve our problems. Suicide only makes us start again, worse off than before. We shall overcome death when we have overcome sin, for the physical manifestation called death is but the externalization in conscious experience of spiritual death—lack of a demonstrable understanding of Life, Truth, Spirit, which is God, unlimited good."

"And the Church, Protestant and Catholic, with their ceremonies, their Masses, and—"

"They have woefully missed the mark, Ned. They are all but spiritually dead. But I see protest rising in our good friends, Doctor Siler and Reverend Moore, so I will hasten on, for we have much ground still to cover.

"Now, knowing that birth is a humanly mental process, is it possible that the man Jesus was 'born of a virgin'? Quite so; but, more, *no man ever conceived and born in the way human beings are generated has ever begun to approach Jesus in degree of spirituality.* If he had been born in human ways, is it likely that he would ever have developed such intense spirituality? Well, not in a brief thirty-three years or so! And, on the other hand, if he had come into the world in some way other than by being born of a woman, would he have been

understandable at all to the human mind? I think not. He would have been wholly in the realm of the mental, far above human perception. If he had been conceived by the union of the two sexes, as is the mortal-mind mode of generation, would he not have been too material to have so quickly developed that spirituality which made him the light of the world at the age of thirty-three? I think it is a fair question. The theory of the virgin birth at least seems to meet the need of a sort of middle course, whereby the man should not be too human to be the channel for the great measure of spirituality with which he was endowed, and yet should be human enough to be appreciable to other human minds.

"Remember, the Jesus who has been reported to us must have regarded matter as unreal, as nothingness. His works plainly show that. And they as plainly show that he came from the Father. His whole life was such as to render the virgin birth almost a necessity, as I see it. How otherwise can we explain him? And from a study of the Gospels I simply can not avoid the conclusion that his knowledge of the allness of God rendered matter such a nonentity to him that he overcame all material laws, overcame the world of matter, and even at the last dematerialized his material body. It's an astonishing thought—and yet, who can show that it is not true? There are some things that reason insists on our accepting, despite the paucity of human records."

"I believe, Mr. Waite," said Doctor Morton, "that the Gospels according to Mark and John make no mention of the virgin birth. Is it not so?"

"Quite true," replied Father Waite. "And I will go further: Biblical research during the past few years seems to have established the conclusion that Mark's Gospel antedates the others, but that prior to it there existed a collection of sayings by Jesus, called the *Logia*. This collection of sayings seems to have been originally written in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. Now Matthew Arnold tells us that the Gospel narratives passed through at least fifty years of oral tradition before they became fixed in the form in which we now have them. Of course it is quite possible that the story of the virgin birth arose during those fifty years, for we can imagine how the life of Jesus was then discussed! Matthew and Luke alone speak of the virgin birth. Mark's Gospel we believe to have been written by Mark himself. And we believe that Papias, who wrote about the middle of the second century, spoke truly when he said: 'Mark having become (or having been) Peter's interpreter, wrote all that he remembered (or all that Peter related) though he did not (record) in order that which was

said or done by Christ.' In other words, even as Renan admits, the Gospel of Mark must be taken as authentically his. Now Matthew's Gospel depends for most of its data upon Mark and the Collection of sayings. Mark's Gospel does not mention the virgin birth; the Collection probably did. Also, Matthew probably did not write the Gospel attributed to him; but he almost certainly did write the Collection of sayings, from which in part the present Gospel according to Matthew was compiled. Luke's Gospel was undoubtedly written by the physician Luke, Paul's companion, and depended largely for its data upon Mark's Gospel and the Collection of Matthew. Yet we can not say that the omission of mention in the Gospels according to Mark and John of the virgin birth renders the story a legend, in view of our own present great knowledge of the constitution of matter, of material laws, and of the fact that the virgin birth is at least rendered credible by the subsequent very extraordinary career of Jesus. Moreover, remember that our New Testament is a small book, and that it is quite probable that a great mass of literature existed on the subject of Jesus and his work, and that it is possible that other of the disciples wrote treatises, perhaps many of them. How many of these touched on the subject of the virgin birth we may never know. Perhaps none; perhaps all. But this conclusion at least we must accept: the validity of the story of the virgin birth does *not* rest with the four Gospels which have come down to us out of the great mass of literature which probably once existed. Rather is the probability of the immaculate conception a function of our present knowledge of matter, its pseudo-laws, and the great fact that the entire life of Jesus as reported in all the Gospels lends weight to the belief that his birth was not in the ordinary mortal-mind manner."

"I accept that," said Hitt. "I believe you are right."

"And I," said Carmen, "can not see that the origin of the human channel through which the Christ-principle flowed to mankind is of any consequence. The principle has always existed. Jesus said that it existed before Abraham. It alone is the important thing."

"Very true," replied Father Waite. "It has been said that the immaculate conception was the result of Mary's realization that real man is the son of God. This is a beautiful thought. Certainly Jesus did seem to manifest some such metaphysical idea. Perhaps Mary was a woman of tremendous force of character. Perhaps it did come to her that her son should be the Messiah of his race. Jesus certainly did acquire the messianic consciousness—and thereby upheaved the world. But, whatever the human mode of birth, certainly the Christ-prin-

ciple was brought into the world because of the world's tremendous need. It came as a response. It is only the confusing of the Christ with the man Jesus that is so largely responsible for the weakness of orthodox theology.

"But now, referring again to the Bible, let me say that the Pentateuch is composed of a variety of documents written by various authors. We have no positive proof that Moses had aught to do with its authorship, although parts of it may be based on data which either he originated or sanctioned. The books of Samuel exhibit a plurality of sources. The book of Isaiah was written to record the sayings of at least two persons, both men of marvelous spiritual vision. The Song of Solomon was originally probably a Persian love-poem. The book of Job illustrates the human-mind problem of suffering, and the utter inadequacy of philosophy to heal it. It is a ringing protest against conventional theology.

"But it is with the New Testament that we are particularly concerned, for we believe it to contain the method of salvation from human ills. None of the original documents are extant, of course. And yet, the most searching textual criticism goes to show that the New Testament books as we have them to-day are genuine reproductions of the original documents, with but very little adulteration of erroneous addition by later hands. This means much to us. I have already spoken of the first three Gospels. The book of Acts certainly was written by the author of the third Gospel, Luke. First Peter was composed by the disciple Peter, or was written under his sanction. The Gospel of John and the book of First John were written by one and the same author—but whether by the disciple John or not, I can not say. If this great disciple did not write the Fourth Gospel, at least his influence seems to be felt all through it. The probability is that he knew what was in it, and approved of it, although the actual composition may have been by another, possibly a very learned Greek. To me, the Fourth Gospel is the most masterly work ever composed by man. It stands absolutely alone. The criticism that John, being a Jew, could not have composed it, falls before the greater truth that, having become a Christian, he was no longer a Jew. He was a new creature. For how could he have been other, seeing that he had lived with Jesus?

"And now as to Paul, who contributes about one-third of the New Testament. I have mentioned the letters to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans as indisputably his. To these we can add, with scarcely less weight of authenticity, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. As to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, there is still doubt. These

letters were written to the various Churches chronologically, as I have mentioned them. It has been said that Jesus was way over the heads of his reporters. That was inevitable. Even Paul misunderstood him at times. But—and here is the important fact for us—Paul's letters exhibit a marvelous spiritual growth in the man, and show him at last to be the grand master-metaphysician of the Christian era. Has it ever occurred to you that what the Gospels tell about is almost wholly spiritual? The material is all but neglected by their composers. Indeed, with the questions of time and place, the Gospel narrators seemed to have been but slightly concerned. But with the delineation of the Christ—ah! that was their theme. They were not writing a biography. They were painting a spiritual portrait. In the light of this great truth the apparent lack of harmony in the Gospel narratives loses significance. And how little there is in the Gospels of theology, of institution, of organization! How trifling are creed and doctrine, how little are Catholicism and Protestantism, compared with the stupendous fact that God is, and that His truth, the Christ-principle, is still here to-day and available!

"And so with Paul, he was expounding the 'method and secret' of the Christ. And he first had to work up to it himself. He may have thought, when he wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, that the man Jesus would come again in the skies, with great pomp and surrounded by the Saints. But in his second letter he states plainly that the Christ will come when the 'old man' is laid off. Not much occasion for misunderstanding there, I think. Indeed, after Jesus so clearly stated that the kingdom of heaven was within men, the marvel is that there could have arisen any confusion whatsoever on the subject of the second coming of the Christ."

"I believe," interposed Reverend Moore, "that the Epistle to the Hebrews contains statements of belief in a judgment after death, in a heaven, a hell, and everlasting life, not wholly consistent with your remarks."

"The Epistle to the Hebrews," returned Father Waite, "was not written by Paul, nor is it quite consistent with his letters. But, read Paul's wonderful eighth chapter of Romans. Read his third chapter of First Corinthians. Read all his letters in the order in which I have mentioned them, which was as they were written, and you can not fail to grasp his marvelous expanding perception of the Christ-principle; the nothingness of the material concept; the impotence of the lie that opposes God, and constitutes all evil; and the necessity of right-thinking if one would work out his salvation from the errors that assail mankind. Paul shows that he passed through a 'belief period,'

and that he emerged into the light of demonstrable understanding at last. If men had followed him they never could have fallen into the absurd theological beliefs of foreordination, infant damnation, the resurrection of the flesh, and all the other theological horrors and atrocities of the centuries.

"Yes, the Bible is, as Arnold said, based on propositions which all can verify. The trouble is, *mankind have not tried to verify them!* They have relegated all that to the life beyond the grave. I fear a sorry disappointment awaits them, for, even as Paul says, they will be after the change called death only what they were before. It is like recovering from a case of sickness, for sickness and death are alike manifestations of mortal thought. We awake from each still human, still with our problems before us. We must break the mesmerism of the belief that the practical application of Jesus' teachings must be relegated to the realm of death, or to the unattainable. We must apply the Christ-principle, and learn to hit the mark, for sin is always weakness, never strength.

"And remember this: having acquired a knowledge of the Christ, we are bidden to acknowledge him—that is, to *act-our-knowledge.* Many of the world's philosophers have worked out great truths. But they have rested content with that. Many scientists, knowing that matter is unreal, nevertheless conduct themselves *as if it constituted the one and only real fact of existence!* Is error like truth? Decidedly no! It is truth's exact opposite. Is truth real? Certainly it is! Then its opposite *can not* be real. The human mentality holds the belief that there is something apart from God, spirit. That belief becomes objectified in the human mentality as matter. And within matter is contained all evil of every sort and name. Evil is not, as the philosophers would have us believe, a lower form of good. It is not 'good in the making.' It is always error, the direct opposite of truth. And if truth is real and eternal, error can not be. See the grave mistake in which Emerson became enmeshed. He said: 'There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms.' Now follow that out to its logical conclusion. If spirit is synonymous with God, then God manifests Himself in both good and evil, fair and foul, life and death—and which is good, and which bad? All is alike the reflection of God. No, my friends, rather accept Jesus' statement that evil is the lie, of which no man need be afraid, and which all must and shall overcome. And the 'old man,' with all his material concepts of nature and the universe, must and will be laid off, thus revealing the spiritual man, the image and likeness of the one divine Mind.

"Now, just a few words about miracles, the great stumbling

block to the acceptance of the Gospels. Are they, together with the entire Gospel narrative, legendary? If so, they must have arisen during those fifty years between Jesus and the recording of the narratives. But this very period is covered by Paul's letters, which record his thought. And even the most relentless of Bible critics admit the genuineness of Paul's authorship of the Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Thessalonians, and the Galatians. If the Gospel narratives are legends, they grew up and found acceptance in fifty years. A pretty fair miracle in itself, when we take into consideration the inherent incredulity of the human mind! As Dean Farrar says: 'Who would have *invented,* who would have merely *imagined,* things so unlike the thoughts of man as these?'

"Now Paul must have been acquainted with men who had seen and known Jesus. And we are forced to admit that Paul was a very strong, sane man. These legends could not have grown up in his day and been accepted by him. And as long as there were men living who had known Jesus—and that must have been as late as the last quarter of the first century—the true events of Jesus' life could hardly have given way to a set of childish legends. As a matter of recorded fact, the various Christian Churches had accepted Jesus within thirty years of the crucifixion. And, too, the words of Paul and the Synoptists were written at a time when the sick were still being healed and even the dead raised by the practical application of Jesus' teachings. Hence, miracles did not astonish them.

"Our own inability to perform the works attributed to Jesus is hardly sufficient ground for denying the belief that he really did them. For what is a miracle? Certainly that the greater portion of the New Testament was written by a few fishermen, a publican, and a tentmaker is one of the most stupendous miracles on record! And the miracle of miracles is Jesus Christ himself! Because Jesus is reported to have healed the sick, raised the dead, and walked the waves, all in opposition to material laws—the so-called laws of nature—the world says the reports are fantastic, that they are fables, and that his reporters were hypnotized, deluded! And yet I tell you that he did not break a single law! He did act in defiance of the so-called testimony of the physical senses, which has always been accepted by mankind as law. We now know what that sense-testimony is—human, mortal thought. He did rise above human consciousness of evil. And because he did so, he instantaneously healed the sick. A miracle expresses, not the beliefs of the human mind, but the law of God, infinite mind, and makes that law conceivable to the human mentality. God's laws are *never* set aside, for by very

definition a law is immutable, else it ceases to be law. But when the human mind grows out of itself sufficiently to perceive those laws and to express them to its fellow-minds, the result is called a miracle. Moreover, the ability to perform miracles is but a function of spirituality. A miracle is a sign of one's having advanced to such a degree of spirituality as to enable him to rise above material consciousness and its limitations, which are called laws. The consciousness that knows no evil will perform miracles. The early Christians did great works. These works were the 'signs following,' and attested their knowledge of the allness of God. A miracle is simply a proof of God. Carmen—"

"Lewis!" protested the girl.

"Let me say it, please. Carmen *knew* that no power opposed to God could hold Sidney. And the 'sign' followed. Yes, she performed a miracle. She broke a human-mind, so-called law, a limitation. She proved God's law of harmony and holiness—wholeness—to be omnipresent and omnipotent. And, mark me, friends, *every one of us must learn to do likewise!* Not only must the Church obey Jesus and do the works which he did, but every individual will have to do them himself."

"His works were done for a special reason, Mr. Waite," interposed Reverend Moore. "They were to testify to his messiahship. They are not required of us."

Father Waite silently regarded the minister for some moments. Then he went on gently:

"It seems incredible that the plain teachings of Jesus could have been so warped and twisted as they have been by orthodox theology. Christianity is *so* simple! Why should even the preachers themselves condemn the one who seeks to obey Christ? Mr. Moore, the real man is God's highest idea of Himself. The human mind makes mental concepts of God's man. And Jesus was the grandest concept of God's idea of Himself that the human mind has ever constructed by means of its interpretations. He was the image of truth. One of his grandest characteristics was his implicit obedience to his vision of the Father. And he demanded just as implicit obedience from us. But he bade us, again and again, *heal the sick and raise the dead!*"

"We heal the sick! We have our physicians!"

"Yes? And Asa had his physicians to whom he turned—with the result that he 'slept with his fathers.' There is no more ironical statement in the whole Bible than that. We turn to our physicians because we have no faith in God. *Materia medica* physicians do *not* heal the sick. They sometimes succeed in causing the human mind temporarily to substitute a

belief of health for a belief of disease, that is all. But Jesus and the early Christians healed by true prayer—the prayer of affirmation, the prayer that denied reality to evil, and affirmed the omnipotence of God. And that was done through an understanding of God as immutable law, or principle."

"Would you pray to a principle?" demanded Reverend Moore, with a note of contempt in his voice. "I prefer my own concept of God, as one who hears our petitions, and pities us, and not as a lifeless principle!"

"God is principle, Mr. Moore," replied Father Waite, "in that He is *'that by which all is.'* And in order to be such He must be, as the Bible says, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.' He must be immovable, regardless of human pleading and petition. And so true prayer, the prayer that draws an answer, is not an objective appeal to Him, but is an intelligent application of the Christ-principle to all our problems and needs. Such prayer will remove mountains in proportion to the understanding and motive back of it. And such prayer does not seek to inform the Almighty of the state of affairs here among men, informing Him that evil is real and rampant, and begging that He will stoop down and remove it. It is the prayer that manifests man's oneness with the infinite mind as its image, reflecting a knowledge of the allness of good and the consequent unreality and powerlessness of evil, the lie about it. It was healing by such prayer, Mr. Moore, that the Episcopal Synod rejected only recently. Instead of doing the healing themselves by means of the principle given them, they still plead with God, the immovable and immutable, to do it for them, provided the very uncertain science of *materia medica* fails.

"The true method of prayer was employed by the early Christians, until the splendid vision of the Christ became obscured and finally lost to the Church by its bargaining with Constantine for a mess of pottage, namely, temporal power. Then began to rise that great worldly institution, the so-called Holy Church. In the first half of the sixth century Justinian closed the schools of philosophy at Athens. For a while Judaizing Christianity continued its conflict with Gnosticism. And then both merged themselves into the Catholic form of faith, which issued forth from Rome, with Christian tradition grafted upon paganism. Theology and ritualism divided the gospel of healing the sick and saving the sinner into two radically different systems, neither of which is Christian, and neither of which can either heal or save. Since then, lip-service and ceremonial have taken the place of healing the sick and raising the dead. The world again slipped back steadily from

the spiritual to the material, and to-day ethics constitutes our religion, and stupid drugs hold sway where once sat enthroned the healing Christ-principle."

"I would remind you, Mr. Waite, that I have Catholic leanings myself," said Doctor Siler. "I don't like to hear either my religion or my profession abused."

"My criticism, Doctor," replied Father Waite, "is but an exposure of the entrenched beliefs and modes of the human mind."

"But, sir, the Church is a great social force, and a present necessity."

"The worth of a belief as a social force, Doctor, must be ascertained from its fruits. The Roman Church has been an age-long instigator of wars, disorders, and atrocious persecutions throughout the world. Its assumption that its creed is the only religious truth is an insult to the world's expanding intelligence. Its arrogant claim to speak with the authority of God is one of the anomalies of this century of enlightenment. Its mesmeric influence upon the poor and ignorant is a continuous tragedy."

"The poor and ignorant! Are you unmindful of the Church's schools and hospitals?"

"No, Doctor. Nor am I ignorant of the fact that the success of Christianity is *not* measured by hospitals. Rather, their continuance attests the lamentable failure of its orthodox misinterpretation. I have been a priest, Doctor. I do not want to see this splendid country forced into the iron shackles of priestcraft."

"It can not happen here!" cried Haynerd, pounding the table with his fist. "The time has passed when a man can say, 'My church, be she right or wrong, but my church!' and insist that it shall be forced upon us, whether we like it or not!"

"Doctor," continued Father Waite, "the Romanist has always missed the mark. He prayed to a God of love to give him power to exterminate heretics—those who differed with him in belief. But he prayed with iniquity, hatred, murder in his heart; and God, who is too pure to know evil, heard him not. Prayer is the affirmation of omnipotent *good.* Is it good to murder one's fellow-men? The Psalmist wrote: 'If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.' That is why the Church's prayers and curses have failed, and why she herself is a failing institution to-day. I say this in pity, not in malice."

"I, sir, believe in a religion that can hate," returned the doctor. "Christianity is as much a religion of hate as of love —hatred of all that is evil and opposed to the revealed Word of God."

"And thereby your religion will fail, and has failed, for God is love. You, by your hatred of what you consider evil, make evil real. Indeed, the Church has always emphasized evil as a great and living reality. How could it ever hope to overcome it then? Your Church, Doctor, has little of the meekness of the Christ, and so, little of his strength. It has little of his spirituality. Its numbers and great material wealth do not constitute power. Its assumptions remind me of the ancient Jews, who declared that God spent much of His time reading their Talmud. You will have to lay aside, Doctor, all of it, and turn to the simple, demonstrable teachings of Jesus. When you have learned to do the works he did, then will you have justified yourself and your faith."

While Father Waite was speaking, Carmen had quietly risen and taken her place at the piano. When he concluded, she began to play and sing softly. As the sweet melody flowed out through the room the little group became silent and thoughtful. Again it was that same weird lament which the girl had sung long before in the Elwin school to voice the emotions which surged up in her during her loneliness in the great city. In it her auditors heard again that night the echoing sighs of the passive Indians, enslaved by the Christian Spaniards. Hitt's head sank upon his breast as he listened. Haynerd tried to speak, but choked. The Beaubien buried her face in her hands and wept softly. The lines about Doctor Siler's mouth relaxed, and his lips trembled. He rose quietly and went around to where Father Waite sat.

"My friend—" He bent and took Father Waite's hand. "We are—friends?"

Father Waite sprang to his feet and threw an arm about the doctor. "We are more than that, Doctor," he whispered. "We are brothers. And in reality we are both, here and now, beloved children of God."

Doctor Siler bowed. Then he nodded to the others, and took his departure. As he passed the piano Carmen rose and seized his hand.

"You know, Doctor, that we love you, don't you?"

"Your love," he murmured, as he bent over her hand, "is from the Christ. Nay, it *is* the Christ himself among us!"

He would have said more, but his voice broke. Then he went out.

When Hitt, Reverend Moore, and Doctor Morton had left, Haynerd, who had remained for a moment to speak to Father Waite, turned to the Beaubien.

"Madam," he said, "Mr. Hitt is a remarkable man. He is conducting a remarkable newspaper. But—" He stopped and

looked at Carmen. "Well, if I mistake not, his quietness this evening indicated his belief that this might be our last meeting for some time."

"Why, Ned?"

Haynerd shook his head dubiously. Then, abruptly:

"Telephone me, Carmen, if anything of interest comes up to-morrow in Avon."

The Beaubien turned quickly to the girl. "You are going to Avon to-morrow? Don't! Please don't!" There was a look of fear in her eyes.

Carmen drew the woman to her, then stooped and kissed her cheek. "Mother dearest, I go to Avon with my God."

The Beaubien bowed her head. She knew it was so.

And the girl went early the next morning.

CHAPTER 11

THE town of Avon, two hours from New York, lay along Avon creek, from which its first manufacturing industries derived their motive power. Years before, when it was little more than a barren stretch of sand, some enterprising soul had built a cotton mill there, with only a few primitive looms. As the years passed, and kindly Congresses reared about the industry a high protective wall, the business prospered marvelously. But shortly after the death of the senior Ames the company became involved, through mismanagement, with the result that, to protect itself, the house of Ames and Company, the largest creditor, was obliged to take over its mills.

At first, J. Wilton Ames was disposed to sell the assets of the defunct company, despite the loss to his bank. But then, after a visit of inspection, and hours of meditation on certain ideas which had occurred to him, he decided to keep the property. The banging of the looms, the whirr of the pickers, the sharp little shrieks of the spinning machines, fascinated him, as he stood before them. They seemed to typify the ceaseless throbbing of his own great brain. They seemed, too, to afford another outlet for that mighty flood of materialistic thought and energy which flowed incessantly through it.

And so he set about reorganizing the business. He studied the process of cloth manufacture. He studied the growth and handling of cotton. He familiarized himself with every detail of the cotton market. He was already well versed in the intricacies of the tariff. And soon the idle machinery was roar-

ing again. Soon the capacity of the mills was doubled. And soon, very soon, the great Ames mills at Avon had become a corporate part of our stupendous mechanical development of the century just closed.

When Carmen stepped from the train that morning she stood for a moment looking uncertainly about her. Everywhere on one side as far as she could see were low, ramshackle frame houses; a few brick store buildings stood far up the main street; and over at her right the enormous brick mills loomed high above the frozen stream. The dull roar of the machinery drifted through the cold air to her ears. Up the track, along which she had just come, some ragged, illy clad children were picking up bits of coal. The sight seemed to fix her decision. She went directly to them, and asked their names.

"Anton Spivak," answered one of the children dully, when she laid a hand on his shoulder.

"And where do you live?"

"Over dere," pointing off to the jungle of decrepit sheds. "Me an' him, we worked in de mills; but dere ain't no work fer us now. Dey's on half time."

"Take me to your home," she said firmly.

The boy looked his astonishment. "Dere ain't nobody to home," he replied. "De ol' man an' woman works in de mills daytimes."

"Come-a home wi' me," spoke up the boy's companion, a bright-faced little urchin of some ten years who had given his name as Tony Tolesi. "We lives in de tenements."

Carmen looked at him for a moment. "Come," she said.

Up the main street of the town they went for a short distance, then turned and wended their course, through narrow streets and byways, down toward the mills. In a few minutes they were in the district where stood the great frame structures built by the Ames company to house its hands. Block after block of these they passed, massive, horrible, decrepit things, and at last stopped at a grease-stained, broken door, which the little fellow pushed open. The hall beyond was dark and cold. Carmen followed shivering, close after the boy, while he trotted along, proud of the responsibility of conducting a visitor to his home. At the far end of the hall the lad plunged into a narrow staircase, so narrow that a stout man could not have mounted it. Up four of these broken flights Carmen toiled after him, and then down a long, desolate corridor, which sent a chill into the very marrow of her bones.

"Dis is where we lives, Missy," announced the little fellow. "Miss-a Marcus, she live in dere," pointing to the door directly opposite. "She ain't got only one arm."

He pushed open the door before which they had halted. A rush of foul air and odors of cooking swept out. They enveloped the girl and seemed to hurl her back. A black-haired woman, holding a crying baby in her arms, rose hastily from an unmade bed at one side of the room. Two little girls, six or eight years of age, and a boy still younger, ranged about their mother and stared in wide-eyed wonder.

"Dis-a lady, she come to visit," announced Carmen's guide abruptly, pointing a dirty finger at her.

The woman's face darkened, and she spoke harshly in a foreign tongue to the little fellow.

"She say," the boy interpreted, as a crestfallen look spread over his face, "she say she don't spik *Inglese*."

"But I speak your language," said the girl, going quickly to her and extending a hand. Then, in that soft tongue which is music celestial to these Neapolitan strangers upon our inhospitable shores, she added, "I want to know you; I want to talk to you."

She glanced quickly about the room. A littered, greasy cook stove stood in one corner. Close to it at either end were wooden couches, upon which were strewn a few tattered spreads and blankets, stained and grimy. A broken table, a decrepit chest of drawers, and a few rickety chairs completed the complement of furniture. The walls were unadorned, except for a stained chromo of the Virgin, and the plaster had fallen away in many places. There was only one window in the room. Several of its panes were broken and stuffed with rags and papers.

At the sound of her own language the woman's expression changed. A light came into her dull eyes, and she awkwardly took the proffered hand.

"You are—from Italy?" she said in her native tongue. Then, sweeping the girl's warm attire with a quick glance, "You are rich! Why do you come here?"

"Your little boy brought me. And I am glad he did. No, I am not from Italy. I am rich, yes, but not in money."

The woman turned to her children and sent the little brood scattering. At another sharp command little Tony set out a soiled, broken chair for Carmen. But before the girl could take it the woman's voice again rose sharply.

"Wait!" she commanded, turning fiercely upon Carmen. "You are—what do you say? slumming. You come with your gay party to look us over and go away laughing! No! You can not stay!"

Carmen did not smile. But reaching out, she gently lifted the heavy baby from the woman's arms and sat down with it. For a moment she patted its cheeks and bent tenderly over it. Then she looked up at the bewildered mother.

"I have come here," she said softly, "because I love you."

The woman's lips parted in astonishment. She turned dully and sat down on one of the begrimed beds. Her little ones gathered about her, their soiled fingers in their mouths, or clutching their tattered gowns, as they gazed at the beautiful creature who had suddenly come into their midst.

Then the woman found her voice again. "Eh! You are from the mission? You come to talk of heaven? But I am busy."

"I am not from the mission," replied the girl gently. "I have come to talk, not of heaven, but of earth, and of you, and of Tony," smiling down into the eager face of the little boy as he stood before her.

"You can't have Tony!" cried the mother, starting up. "You can't take any of my children! The judge took Pietro Corrello's boy last week—but you can't have mine! Go away from here!"

"I don't want your children," said Carmen, smiling up at the frightened, suspicious mother. "I want *you*. I want you to help me to help all of these people here who need us. The mills are running only half time, aren't they? The people do not have enough to eat. But we, you and I, are going to make things better for them, for everybody here, aren't we?

"But first," she went on hastily, to further allay the poor woman's fears and to check additional protest, "suppose we plan our dinner. Let's see, Tony, what would you like?"

The boy's lips instantly parted. His eyes began to glisten. He glanced inquiringly at his mother; but no sign came from her. Then he could no longer contain himself:

"Spaghetti!" he blurted. "Soup! Buns!"

Carmen drew out her purse and turned to the woman. "Come with me," she said. "While we are gone, Tony and the children will wash the dishes and set the table. Come."

For a moment the woman looked uncomprehendingly at the girl, then at her children, and then about the miserable room in which they were huddled. Amazement and confusion sat upon her heavy features. Then these gave way to another dark look of suspicion. She opened her mouth—

But before she could voice her resentment, Carmen rose and threw an arm about her. Then the girl quickly drew the startled woman to her and kissed her on the cheek. "Come," she whispered, "get your shawl. We'll be back soon."

God's universal language is the language of love. All nations, all tribes understand it. The flood-gates, long barred, swiftly opened, and the tired, miserable woman sank sobbing upon the bed. She could not comprehend what it was that

had come so unannounced into her dreary existence that cold winter morning. People were not wont to treat her so. Her life had been an endless, meaningless struggle against misery, want, grinding oppression. People did not put their arms around her and kiss her thus. They scoffed at her, they abused her, they fought with her! She hated them, and the world in which she lived!

"I know, I know," whispered Carmen, as she drew the sobbing woman's head upon her shoulder. "But things will be better now. Love has found you."

The woman suddenly raised up. "You—you are—from heaven? An angel?" She drew back, and a frightened, superstitious look came into her face.

"Yes," said Carmen softly, taking the cue, "I am an angel, right from heaven. Now you are no longer afraid of me, are you? Come."

The woman rose mechanically and took up her thin shawl. Carmen gave a few directions to the gaping children. And as she went out into the bleak hall with the woman she heard one of them whisper in tones of awe:

"Tony, she said she—she was—an angel! Quick! Get down on your knees and cross yourself!"

* * * * * *

Upward to the blue vault of heaven, like the streaming mists that rise through the tropic moonlight from the hot *llanos*, goes the ceaseless cry of humanity. Oh, if the god of the preachers were real, his heart must have long since broken! Upward it streams, this soul-piercing cry; up from the sodden, dull-brained toiler at the crashing loom; up from the wretched outcast woman, selling herself to low passions to escape the slavery of human exploitation; up from the muttering, ill-fed wreck, whose life has been cashed into dividends, whose dry, worthless hulk now totters to the scrap heap; up from the white-haired, flat-chested mother, whose stunted babes lie under little mounds with rude, wooden crosses in the dreary textile burial grounds; up from the weak, the wicked, the ignorant, the hopeless martyrs of the satanic social system that makes possible the activities of such human vultures as the colossus whose great mills now hurled their defiant roar at this girl, this girl whose life-motif was love.

Close about her, at the wretched little table, sat the wondering group of children, greedily gorging themselves on the only full meal that they could remember. And with them sat the still bewildered mother, straining her dark eyes at the girl, and striving to see in her a human being, a woman like herself. At her right sat the widow Marcus, who lived just across the hall.

Her husband had been crushed to death in one of the pickers two years before. The company had paid her a hundred dollars, but had kept back five for alleged legal fees. She herself had lost an arm in one of these same pickers, long ago, because the great owner of the mills would not equip his plant with safety devices.

"Come, Tony!" said the mother at length, as a sense of the reality of life suddenly returned to her. "The lunch for your father!"

Tony hurriedly swept the contents of his plate into his mouth, and went for the battered dinner pail.

"My man goes to work at six-thirty in the morning," she explained to Carmen, when the little fellow had started to the mills with the pail unwontedly full. "And he does not leave until five-thirty. He was a weaver, and he earned sometimes ten dollars a week. But he didn't last. He wore out. And so he had to take a job as carder. He earns about eight dollars a week now. But sometimes only six or seven."

"But you can't live on that, with your children!" exclaimed Carmen.

"Yes, we could," replied the woman, "if the work was steady. But it isn't. You see, if I could work steady, and the children too, we could live. I am a good spinner. And I am not nearly so worn out as he is. I have several years left in me yet."

The widow Marcus, who spoke the language from an association with Italian immigrants since childhood, added her comments from time to time. She was a gray-haired, kindly soul, bearing no enmity toward the man to whom she had yielded her husband's life and her own.

"A man's no good in the mills after he's fifty," she said. "You see, Miss, it's all piece-work, and a man has to be most terribly spry and active. The strain is something awful, day after day, in the noise and bad air, and having to keep your eyes fixed on your work for ten hours at a stretch; and he wears out fast. Then he has to take a job where he can't make so much. And when he's about fifty he's no good for the mills any more."

"And then what?" asked Carmen.

"Well, if he hasn't any children, he goes to the poor-house. But, if he has, then they take care of him."

"Then mill workers must have large families?"

"Yes, they've got to, Miss. The little ones must work in the mills, too. These mills here take them on when they are only twelve, or even younger. Tony has worked there, and he is only ten. It's against the law; but Mr. Ames gets around the law some way."

"Tell me, Mrs. Marcus, how do you live?" the girl asked.

"I? Oh, I manage. The company paid me some money two years ago, and I haven't spent all of it yet. Besides, I work round a bit. I'm pretty spry with one arm."

"But—you do not pay rent for your home?"

"Oh, yes. I have only one room. It's small. There's no window in it. It's an inside room."

"And you pay rent—to Mr. Ames—the man whose machines killed your husband and took off your arm—you still pay rent to him, for one little room?"

"Yes, Miss. He owns these tenements. Why, his company gave me almost a hundred dollars, you know! I was lucky, for when Lizzie Sidel's man lost his hand in the cog wheels he went to law to sue the company, and three years afterward the case was thrown out of court and he had to pay the costs himself. But he was a picker-boss, and got nine dollars a week."

A little hand stole up along Carmen's arm. She looked down into the wondering face of the child. "I—I just wanted to see, *Signorina*, if you were real."

"I have been wondering that myself, dear," replied the girl, as her thought dwelt upon what she had been hearing.

"I must go now, Miss," said the widow Marcus, rising. "I promised to drop in and look after Katie Hoolan's children this afternoon. She's up at the mills."

"Then I will go with you," Carmen announced. "But I will come back here," she added, as some little hands seized hers. "If not to-day, then soon—perhaps to-morrow."

She crossed the cold hall with Mrs. Marcus, and entered the doorway which led to the little inner room where dwelt the widow. There were a dozen such rooms in the building, the latter informed her. This one in particular had been shunned for many years, for it had a bad reputation as a breeder of tuberculosis. But the rent was low, and so the widow had taken it after her man was killed. It contained a broken stove, a dirty bed, and a couple of unsteady chairs. The odor was fetid. The walls were damp, and the paper which had once covered them was molding and rotting off.

"It won't stay on," the widow explained, as she saw the girl looking at it. "The walls are wet all the time. Comes up from the cellar. The creek overflows and runs into the basement. They call this the 'death-room.'"

Death! Carmen shuddered when she looked about this fearful human habitation. Yet, "The only death to be feared," said Paracelsus, "is unconsciousness of God." Was this impoverished woman, then, any less truly alive than the rich owner of the mills which had robbed her of the means of ex-

istence? And can a civilization be alive to the Christ when it breeds these antipodal types?

"And yet, who permits them?" Haynerd had once exclaimed. "Ames's methods are the epitome of hell! But he is ours, and the worthy offspring of our ghastly, inhuman social system. We alone are to blame that he debauches courts, that he blinds executives, and that he buys legislatures! We let him make the laws, and fatten upon the prey he takes within their limits. Aye, he is the crafty, vicious, gold-imbruted manifestation of a whole nation's greed!" Nay, more, he is the externalization of a people's ignorance of God.

Carmen's throat filled as she watched the old woman bustling about the wretched room and making a feeble attempt at order.

"You see," the widow went on, happy in the possession of an auditor, "there is no use making apologies for the looks of my room; I couldn't make it look much better if I tried. There's no running water. We have to get water from the hydrant down back of the house. It is pumped there from the creek, and it's a long climb up these stairs when you've got only one arm to hold the bucket. And I have to bring my coal up, too. The coal dealer charges extra for bringing it up so far."

Carmen sat down on an empty box and watched her. The woman's lot seemed to have touched the depths of human wretchedness, and yet there burned within her soul a something that the oppression of human avarice could not extinguish.

"It's the children, Miss, that I think about," she continued. "It's not so bad as when I was a little one and worked in the cloth mills in England. I was only six when I went into the mills there. I worked from seven in the morning until after six at night. And the air was so bad and we got so tired that we children used to fall asleep, and the boss used to carry a stick to whip us to keep us awake. My parents died when I was only eight. They worked in the Hollow-ware works, and died of lead poisoning. People only last four or five years at that work."

Carmen rose. "How many children are employed in these mills here?" she asked.

"I can't say, Miss. But hundreds of them."

"I want to see them," said the girl, and there was a hitch in her voice as she spoke.

"You can go down and watch them come out about six this evening. It's a sight to a stranger. But now I must hurry to look after the Hoolan babes."

When she again reached the street Carmen turned and

looked up at the hideous structure from which she had emerged; then she drew a long breath. The foul air of the "death-room" seemed to fill her lungs as with leaden weights. The dim light that lay over the wretched hovel hung like a veil before her eyes.

"Katie lives a block down the street," said the widow, pointing in the direction. "She was burned out last winter. These tenements don't have fire-escapes, and the one she lived in burned to the ground in an hour. She lived on the second floor, and got out. But—six were burned to death."

It seemed to Carmen as she listened to the woman that the carnal mind's chamber of horrors was externalized there in the little town of Avon, existing with the dull consent of a people too ignorant, too imbruted, too mesmerized by the false values of life to rise and destroy it.

All that cold winter afternoon the girl went from door to door. There was no thought of fear when she met dull welcomes, scowls, and menacing glances. In humble homes and wretched hovels; to Magyar, Pole, Italian alike; to French Canadian, Irish and Portuguese; and to the angry, the defiant, the sodden, the crushed, she unfolded her simple banner of love, the boundless love that discriminates not, the love that sees not things, but the thoughts and intents of the heart that lie behind them. And dark looks faded, and tears came; withered hearts opened, and lifeless souls stirred anew. She knew their languages; and that knowledge unlocked their mental portals to her. She knew their thoughts, and the blight under which they molded; and that knowledge fell like the sun's bright rays upon them. She knew God, their God and hers; and that knowledge began, even on that dull, gray afternoon, to cut into the chains of human rapacity which enslaved them.

At six that evening she stood at the tall iron gate of the mill yard. Little Tony was at her side, clutching her hand. A single electric lamp across the street threw a flickering, yellow light upon the snow. The great, roaring mills were ablaze with thousands of glittering eyes. Suddenly their monster sirens shrieked, a blood-curdling yell. Then their huge mouths opened, and a human flood belched forth.

Carmen gazed with riveted sight. They were not the image and likeness of God, these creatures, despite the doctrinal platitudes of the Reverend Darius Borwell and the placid Doctor Jurges. They were not alive, these stooping, shuffling things, despite the fact that the religiously contented Patterson Moore would argue that God had breathed the spirit of life into the thing of dust which He created. And these children, drifting past in a great, surging throng! Fathers and mothers of a

generation to come! Carmen knew that many of them, despite their worn looks, were scarcely more than ten years old. These were the flesh and blood upon which Ames, the jungle-beast, waxed gross! Upon their thin life-currents floated the magnificent *Cossack!*

She turned away in silence. Yes, she was right, evil can *not* be really known. There is no principle by which to explain the hideous things of the human mind. And then she wondered what the Reverend Darius Borwell did to earn that comfortable salary of ten thousand a year in his rich New York church.

"It's quite a sight, ain't it, Miss?" said a voice close by.

Carmen turned and confronted a priest. He was a man of medium height, young, and of Irish descent.

"It's a great sight," he continued, with a touch of brogue in his tones. "Hey, Fagin!" he cried, catching a passing workman's arm. "Where's Ross?"

"He ain't worked to-day, Father," replied the man, stopping and touching his cap.

The young priest uttered an exclamation of displeasure. Then, as the workman started away:

"You'll be at the Hall to-night, Fagin? And bring everybody you can."

The man addressed nodded and gave an affirmative grunt, then passed on into the darkness.

"It's trying to reach a few of 'em I am," remarked the priest. "But it's slow work. When a man's stomach's empty he hasn't much respect for morality. And I can't feed the lot of 'em!"

Carmen gazed into the kindly blue eyes of the priest and wondered. "How are you reaching them?" she asked. "I am very much interested."

The priest returned the girl's searching look. "In settlement work?" he queried.

"No—but I am interested in my fellow-beings."

"Ah, then you'll understand. I've some rooms, some on Main street, which I call the Hall, and some down in the—well, the bad district, which I call the Mission. They're reading rooms, places for men to meet, and get acquainted, and rest, and talk. The Hall's for the fellows who work, like this Fagin. The Mission's for the down-and-outs."

"But—are your rooms only for—for men of your faith?"

"Nary a bit!" exclaimed the priest with a little laugh. "Race or religion don't figure. It's to give help to every man that needs it."

"And you are giving your life to help these people?" the girl went on. "I want to see your Hall and Mission. Take me to them," she abruptly demanded.

The priest gave a start of surprise. He looked down at little Tony, and then up at Carmen again.

"Come," she said. "We will leave the boy at his door, and then go to your Mission and Hall. Now tell me, you are a Roman Catholic priest?"

"Yes," he said mechanically, following her as she started away.

"How did you happen to get into this sort of work?" she pursued.

"Oh, I've been at it these ten years!" he returned, now recovered from his surprise, and pleased to talk about his work. "I'd had some experience in New York in the Bowery district. I came to the conclusion that there were mighty few down-and-outs who couldn't be set upon their pins again, given half a chance by any one sufficiently interested. There's the point. You see, Miss, I believe in my fellow-men. The results have justified my labors. Oh, it's only temporary, I know. It ain't going to change the whole social system. It's a makeshift. But it helps a bit—and I like it.

"But," he continued more seriously, "there's going to be trouble here. A strike is coming. And it's going to be a bad one. I wish I could convince Mr. Ames."

"Have you tried?" she asked.

"I've written him several times of late. It doesn't do any good. His secretary writes back that Mr. Ames is doing all he can. But it's not much I see he's doing, except to go on sucking the blood from these poor devils down here!"

They soon reached the tenement where Tony lived, and Carmen asked the priest to go up with her. He raised a hand and smiled.

"No," he said, "the good woman doesn't like priests. And my labors don't reach the women anyway, except through the men. They constitute my field. Some one else must work among the women. I'll wait for you here."

It was only by making many promises that Carmen could at last get away from the little group on the fourth floor. But she slipped a bill into Tony's hands as she went out, and then hurriedly crossed the hall and opened the unlocked door of the widow Marcus's room. The place was empty. Carmen pinned a five-dollar bill upon the pillow and hastened out.

"Now," said the priest, when the girl had joined him in the street below, "it ain't right to take you to the Mission—"

"We'll go there first,' the girl calmly announced. "And then to the Hall. By the way, there's a telephone in your place? I want to call up the health officer. I want to report the condition of these tenements."

The priest laughed. "It won't do any good, Miss. I've camped on his heels for months. And he can't do anything, anyway. I see that. If he gets too troublesome to those higher up, why, he gets fired. They don't want his reports. He isn't here to report on conditions, but to overlook 'em. It's politics."

"You mean to say that nothing can be done in regard to those awful buildings which Mr. Ames owns and rents to his mill hands?" she said.

"That's it," he replied. "It's criminal to let such buildings stand. But Ames owns 'em. That's enough."

They went on in silence for some minutes. Meanwhile, the priest was studying his fair companion, and wondering who she might be. At length he inquired if she had ever been in Avon before.

"No," replied the girl. "I wish I had!"

"Haven't seen Pillette's house then? He's resident manager of the Ames mills. We can go a little out of our way and have a look at it."

A few minutes later they stood at the iron gate of the manager's residence, a massive, brown stone dwelling, set in among ancient trees in an estate of several acres, and surrounded by shrubs and bushes.

"Fine place, eh?" remarked the priest.

"Beautiful," replied Carmen. "Does he know all about those tenements down there?"

"Ah, that he does; and cares less. And he knows all about the terrible hot air in his mills, and the flying lint that clogs the lungs of the babies working there. He sees them leave the place, dripping with perspiration, and go out into the zero temperature half naked. And when they go off with pneumonia, well he knows why; and cares less. He knows that the poor, tired workers in that great prison lose their senses in the awful noise and roar, and sometimes get bewildered and fall afoul of belts and cogs, and lose their limbs or lives. He knows; and doesn't care. So does Mr. Ames. And he wouldn't put safety devices over his machines, because he doesn't care. I've written to him a dozen times about it. But—

"And then Pillette," he continued; "I've asked him to furnish his hands with decent drinking water. They work ten and twelve hours in that inferno, and when they want to drink, why, all they have is a barrel of warm water, so covered with lint that it has to be pushed aside in order to get at the water. Why, Pillette don't even give 'em change rooms! He won't give 'em decent toilet rooms! Says Mr. Ames can't afford it. Seems to me that when a man can give a ball and send out invitations on cards of solid gold, he can afford to give a thought to the

thousands who have toiled and suffered in order to enable him to give such a ball, don't you?"

Carmen did. She had attended that reception. The memory came back now in hot, searing thoughts.

"Oh, he catches 'em coming and going!" the priest went on. "You see, he manipulates Congress so that a high tariff law is passed, protecting him from imported goods. Then he runs up the prices of his output. That hits his mill hands, for they have to pay the higher prices that the tariff causes. Oh, no, it doesn't result in increased wages to them. Ha! ha! Not a bit! They're squeezed both ways. He is the only one who profits by high tariff on cotton goods. See how it works?"

Yes, Carmen saw. She might not know that Ames periodically appeared before Congress and begged its protection—nay, threatened, and then demanded. She might not know that Senator Gossitch ate meekly from the great man's hand, and speciously represented to his dignified colleagues that the benefits of high protective duties were for "the people" of the United States. She might not know how Hood, employed to evade the laws enacted to hedge and restrain his master, bribed and bought, schemed and contrived, lobbied, traded, and manipulated, that his owner might batten on his blood-stained profits, while he kept his face turned away from the scenes of carnage, and his ears stopped against the piteous cries of his driven slaves. But she did know how needless it all was, and how easy, oh! how pitiably easy, it would be to remedy every such condition, would the master but yield but a modicum of his colossal, mesmeric selfishness. She did not know, she could not, that the master, Ames, made a yearly profit from his mills of more than two hundred per cent. But she did know that, were he less stupidly greedy, even to the extent of taking but a hundred per cent profit, he would turn a flood of sunshine into hundreds of sick, despairing, dying souls.

"This is the place," she heard the priest say, his voice seeming to come from a long distance. "This is the Mission."

She stopped and looked about her. They were in front of an old, two-story building, decrepit and forbidding, but well lighted. While she gazed, the priest opened the door and bade her enter.

"This down here is the reading room," he explained. "The door is never locked. Upstairs is my office, and sleeping rooms for men. Also a stock of old clothes I keep on hand for 'em when I send 'em out to look for work. I've clothed an average of four men a day during the past year, and sent 'em out to look for jobs. I board 'em, and keep 'em going until they land something. Sometimes I have to lend 'em money. I just help

'em to help themselves. No, I never bother about a man's religion. Come up to my office."

Carmen climbed the rough steps to the floor above and entered the small but well-kept office of the priest.

"Now here," he said, with a touch of pride, "is my card-index. I keep tab on all who come here. When they get straightened up and go out to hunt work, I give 'em identification cards. Just as soon as I can get funds I'm going to put a billiard table back there and fit up a little chapel, so's the Catholic men who drift in here can attend service. You know, a lot of 'em don't have the nerve to go to a church. Too proud. But they'd attend Mass here."

Carmen looked at the man in admiration. Then a thought came to her. "We haven't either of us asked the other's name," she said.

The priest's eyes twinkled. "I've been dying to know yours," he replied. "I'm Father Magee, Daniel Magee. But the boys generally call me Danny. What shall I call you? Oh, give any name; it doesn't matter, just so's I'll know how to address you."

"I am Carmen Ariza. And I am from South America," said the girl simply. "Now sit down here. I want to talk to you. I have a lot to ask."

* * * * * *

An hour later the girl rose from her chair. "I shall have to wait and visit the Hall another time," she said. "I must catch the eight-thirty back to the city. But—"

"I'll never see you go down this tough street to the depot alone!" averred the priest, reaching for his hat.

Carmen laughed. But she gratefully accepted the proffered escort. Two of Father Magee's assistants had come in meanwhile, and were caring for the few applicants below.

"You're right, Miss Carmen," the priest said, as they started for the train. "Mr. Ames *must* be reached. Perhaps you can do it. I can't. But I'll give you every assistance possible. It eats my heart out to see the suffering of these poor people!"

At eleven o'clock that night Carmen entered the office of the city editor of the Express. "Ned," she said, "I've been with Dante—no, Danny—in Inferno. Now I'm going to Washington. I want expense money—a good lot—so that I can leave to-morrow night."

Haynerd's eyes dilated as he stared at the girl. "Washington!" he ejaculated. "Well—! But what did you find down in Avon?"

"I'll write you a detailed report of my trip to-morrow. I'm going home now," she replied.

CHAPTER 12

IT is sometimes said of the man who toils at forge or loom in this great commonwealth that he is fast forgetting that Washington is something more significant to him than what is embraced in the definition of the gazetteers. Not so, however, of that class of the genus *homo* individualized in J. Wilton Ames. He leaned not upon such frail dependence as the *Congressional Record* for tempered reports of what goes on behind closed legislative doors; he went behind those doors himself. He needed not to yield his meekly couched desires to the law-builders whom his ballot helped select; he himself launched those legislators, and gave them their steering charts. But, since the interpretation of laws was to him vastly more important than their framing, he first applied himself to the selection of judges, and especially those of the federal courts. With these safely seated and instructed at home, he gave himself comfortably to the task of holding his legislators in Washington to the course he chose.

Carmen had not spent a day at the Capital before the significance of this fact to the common citizen swept over her like a tidal wave. If the people, those upon whom the stability of the nation rests, looked as carefully after appointments and elections as did Ames, would their present wrongs continue long to endure? She thought not. And after she had spent the day with the Washington correspondent of the Express, a Mr. Sands, who, with his young wife, had just removed to the Capital, she knew more with respect to the mesmerism of human inertia and its baneful effects upon mankind than she had known before.

And yet, after that first day of wandering through the hallowed precincts of a nation's legislative halls, she sat down upon a bench in the shadow of the Capitol's great dome and asked herself the questions: "What am I here for, anyway? What can *I* do? Why have I come?" She had acted upon—impulse? No; rather, upon instinct. And instinct with her, as we have said, was unrestrained dependence upon her own thought, the thought which entered her mentality only after she had first prepared the way by the removal of every obstruction, including self.

At the breakfast table the second morning after her arrival in the city, Mr. Sands handed her a copy of the Express. Among the editorials was her full report upon conditions as she had found them in Avon, published without her signature. Follow-

ing it was the editor's comment, merciless in its exposition of fact, and ruthless in its exposure of the cruel greed externalized in the great cotton industry in that little town.

Carmen rose from the table indignant and protesting. Hitt had said he would be wise in whatever use he made of her findings. But, though quite devoid of malignity, this account and its added comment were nothing less than a personal attack upon the master spinner, Ames. And she had sent another report from Washington last night, one comprising all she had learned from Mr. Sands. What would Hitt do with that? She must get in touch with him at once. So she set out to find a telegraph office, that she might check the impulsive publisher who was openly hurling his challenge at the giant Philistine.

When the message had gone, the girl dismissed the subject from her thought, and gave herself up completely to the charm of the glorious morning and her beautiful environment. For some time she wandered aimlessly about the city; then bent her steps again toward the Capitol.

At the window of a florist she stopped and looked long and lovingly at the gorgeous display within. In the midst of the beautiful profusion a single flower held her attention. It was a great, brilliant red rose, a kind that she had never seen before. She went in and asked for it.

"We call it the 'President' rose, Miss," said the salesman in response to her query. "It is quite new."

"I want it," she said simply.

And when she went out with the splendid flower burning on her bosom like living fire, she was glad that Hitt had not been there to see her pay two dollars for it.

The great Capitol seemed to fascinate her, as she stood before it a few moments later. The spell of tradition enwrapped her. The mighty sentiments and motives which had actuated the framers of the Constitution seemed to loom before her like monuments of eternal stone. Had statesmanship degenerated from that day of pure patriotism into mere corruption? Mr. Sands would have her so believe.

"The people!" he had exclaimed in scoffing tones. "Why, my dear girl, the people of your great State are represented in the national Senate by—whom? By nobody, I say. By the flies on the panes; by the mice in the corners; by the god, perhaps, to whom the chaplain offers his ineffectual prayers; but not by men. No; one of your Senators represents a great railroad; the other an express company! The people? Those Senators know no such ridiculous creature as 'the people'!"

She turned from the Capitol, and for an hour or more

strolled in the brilliant sunlight. "An economic disease," she murmured at length. "That's what it is. And, like all disease, it is mental. It is a disease of the human conscience. It comes from the fear of separation from good. It all reduces to the belief of separation from God—the belief that upon men's own human efforts depend all the happiness and satisfaction they can have. Why, I have never known anything but happiness and abundance! And yet, *I have never made a single effort to acquire them!*" For the girl saw not the past vicissitudes of her life except as shadowy mists, which dimmed not the sun of her joy.

"Take care!" cried a loud voice close to her.

There was a tramping of horses' feet. A great, dark body swept past. It struck her, and brushed her to one side. She strove to hold herself, but fell.

The man and his companion were off their horses instantly, and assisted the girl to her feet.

"Are you hurt?" asked the one who had been riding ahead. "I called to you, you but didn't seem to hear."

"Not a bit!" laughed the girl, recovering her breath, and stooping to brush the dust from her dress. "I was dreaming, as usual."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that! It was a close shave! I'm mighty sorry! Are you sure you're all right? Perhaps you had better come in with us."

The girl raised her head and looked into his face with a bright smile. The man's anxious expression slowly changed into one of wonder, and then of something quite different. The girl's long, thick hair had been loosened by the fall, and was hanging about her shoulders. Framed in the deep brown profusion was the fairest face he had ever looked upon; the most winning smile; the most loving, compassionate glance.

"You'll have to come in now, and let the maid help you," he said firmly. "And I'll send you home in an auto. May I ask where you live?"

"New York," replied Carmen, a little confused as she struggled vainly with her hair. "Oh, I'm not going to fuss with it any more!" she suddenly exclaimed. "Yes, I'll go with you, and let the maid do it up. Isn't it long!"

She glanced about her, and then up the avenue toward which the men had been riding. A flush suddenly spread over her face, and she turned and looked searchingly at the man.

"You—you—live—in—there?" she stammered, pointing toward the distant house. "And you are—"

"Yes," he replied, coming to her assistance, but evidently greatly enjoying her embarrassment, "I am the President."

Carmen gave a little gasp. "Oh!"

Then her hand stole mechanically to the rose flaming upon her bosom. "I—I guess I know why I bought this now," she said softly. Quickly unpinning it, she extended it to the man. "I was bringing it to you, wasn't I?" she laughed. "It's a 'President' rose."

The picture was one that would have rejoiced an artist: the simple girl, with her tumbled hair and wonderful face, standing there in the glorious sunlight, holding out a single rose to the chief executive of a great nation.

The President bowed low and took the proffered flower. "I thank you," he said. "It is beautiful. But the one who gives it is far more so."

Then he bade his companion take the two horses to the stable, and motioned to Carmen to accompany him.

"I was just returning from my morning ride," he began again, "when you happened—"

"Things *never* happen," interrupted the girl gently.

He looked at her with a little quizzical side glance. "Then you didn't happen to be in the way?" he said, smiling.

"No," she returned gravely. "I was obeying the law of cause and effect."

"And the cause?" he pursued, much interested.

"A desire to see you, I guess. Or, perhaps, the *necessity* of seeing you. And because I wanted to see you in the interests of good, why, evil seemed to try to run over me."

"But why should you wish to see me?" he continued, greatly wondering.

"Because you are the head of a wonderful nation. Your influence is very great. And you are a good man."

He studied her for a moment. Then:

"You came down from New York to talk with me?" he asked.

"I think I came all the way from South America to see you," she said.

"South America!"

"Yes, Colombia."

"Colombia! There is a revolution in progress down there now. Did you come to see me about that? I can do nothing—"

The girl shook her head. "No," she said, "it's to prevent a revolution here in your own country that I think I have come to see you."

They had by now reached the door of the Executive Mansion. Entering, the President summoned a maid, and turned the big-eyed girl over to her. "Bring her to my office," he directed, "when she is ready."

A little later the nameless girl from Simití again stood before the President of the United States.

"I have an important conference at ten," he said, glancing at a clock. "But we have a few minutes before that time. Will you—may I ask you to tell me something about yourself?" he ventured. "You are feeling all right? No bad effects from the accident?" he added, looking apprehensively at her while he set out a chair.

The girl drew the chair close to his desk and sat down. "I know nothing about accidents," she said quietly. Then, turning quite from that topic, she drew the President quickly into her thought and carried him off with her as on a magic carpet.

The man listened in rapt attention. From time to time he turned and stared at his strange visitor. At other times he made notes of points which impressed him. Once he interrupted, when she made reference to her past life. "This priest, José de Rincón, might he not have been imprisoned as a political offender?"

"I do not know," the girl replied tenderly. "My foster-father, Rosendo, did not mention him in the two letters which I have received."

The President nodded; and the girl went rapidly on. Soon she was deep in the problem presented by Avon.

But at the mention of that town, and of its dominating genius, the President seemed to become nervous. At length he raised a hand, as if to end the interview.

"I fear I can do nothing at present," he said with an air of helplessness. "My influence is quite limited."

"But," she protested, "you have the public welfare at heart. And can you not see that public welfare is the welfare of each individual?"

"I know Mr. Ames well," the President replied, somewhat irrelevantly. "He, like all men of great wealth, presents a serious problem, doubtless. But he himself, likewise, is confronted by problems of very trying natures. We must give him time to work them out."

The girl sighed. "It's like getting at the essence of Christianity," she said. "The world has had nearly two thousand years in which to do that, but it hasn't made much of a start as yet. How much time does Mr. Ames require? And how many more lives must he sacrifice?"

"But," the President resumed reflectively, "after all, it is the people who are wholly responsible for the conditions which exist among them. They have the means of remedying every economic situation, the ballot. It is really all in their hands, is it not? They elect their public officers, their judges, and their lawmakers."

Again the girl sighed. "You too," she said, "take refuge in the cant of the age. Yes, the people do try to elect public servants; but by some strange anomaly the servant becomes master the moment he enters the door of office. His thought then centers upon himself. And then they, and you, sit helplessly back and cry, No use! And if the people rise, their servants meet them with a hail of lead. It's really childishly ridiculous, isn't it? when you stop to consider it seriously."

She leaned her elbows upon the desk, and sat with chin in her hands, looking squarely into the eyes of the President.

"So you, the head of this great nation, confess to utter helplessness," she slowly said. "But you don't have to."

A servant entered at that moment with a card. The President glanced at it, and bade him request the caller to wait a few moments. Then, after some reflection:

"The people will always—"

The door through which the servant had passed was abruptly thrown open, and a harsh voice preceded the entrance of a huge bulk.

"I am not accustomed to being told to wait, Mr. President," said the ungracious voice. "My appointment was for ten o'clock, and I am here to keep it."

Then the newcomer stopped abruptly, and stared in amazement at the young girl, sitting with her elbows propped upon the desk, and her face close to that of the President.

The latter rose, flushed and angry. But Ames did not notice him. His attention was centered upon the girl who sat looking calmly up at him. A dark, menacing scowl drew his bushy eyebrows together, and made the sinister look which mantled his face one of ominous import to the person upon whom it fell.

Carmen was the first to break the tense silence. With a bright smile illuming her face she rose and held out a hand to the giant before her. "Good morning, Mr. Ames," she said. "We meet pretty often, don't we?"

Ames ignored both the greeting and the extended hand. Turning upon the President, he said sharply: "So, the Express seeks aid in the White House, eh?"

"No, Mr. Ames," said Carmen quickly, answering for the President. "It seeks to aid the White House."

Ames turned to the girl. "Might I ask," he said in a tone of mordant sarcasm, "how you learned that I was to be here this morning? I would like to employ your methods of espionage in my own business."

"I would give anything if you *would* employ my methods in your business," returned the girl gently.

The President looked in embarrassment from one to the other. "I think, Miss Carmen," he said, "that we must consider our interview ended. This next hour belongs by appointment to Mr. Ames."

A peculiar expression had come into Ames's features. His thought had been working rapidly. Here was an opportunity for a telling stroke. He would play it. His manner suddenly became more gracious.

"Let her remain, Mr. President," he said in a tone pregnant with meaning. "I am glad to have a representative of the New York press with us to hear you express your attitude toward the cotton schedule."

The President caught the insinuation. His hand was to be forced! His indignation mounted, but he checked it.

"The schedule has been reported out of committee," he replied briefly. "It is now before Congress."

"I am aware of that," said Ames. "And your influence with Congress in regard to it?"

"I am studying the matter, Mr. Ames," returned the President slowly.

"Shall the Avon mills be closed pending a decision? Or, on the assumption that Congress will uphold the altered schedule, must the Spinners' Association begin immediate retrenchment? As president of that Association, I ask for instructions."

"My influence with Congress, as you well know, Mr. Ames, is quite limited," replied the hectored executive.

"It is not a question of the *amount* of your influence with that body, Mr. President," returned Ames coldly, "but of how you will employ that which you have."

Silence lay upon them all for some moments. Then Ames resumed:

"I would remind you," he remarked with cruel insinuation, "that—or," glancing at the girl, "perhaps I should not make this public." He paused and awaited the effect of his significant words upon the President. Then, as the latter remained silent, he went on evenly:

"Second-term prospects, you are aware, are often very greatly influenced by public facts regarding the first election. Of course we are saying nothing that the press might use, but—well, you must realize that there is some suspicion current as to the exact manner in which your election was—"

"I think you wish to insinuate that my election was due to the Catholic vote, which you controlled in New York, and to your very generous campaign contributions, do you not? I see no reason for withholding from the press your views on the subject."

"But, my friend, this is an age of investigation, and of suspicion toward all public officials. And such rumors wouldn't look well on the front pages of the press throughout the country. Of course, our young friend here isn't going to mention them to her superiors; but, nevertheless, they ought to be suppressed at once. Their effect upon your second-term prospects would be simply annihilating. Now I am in a position to greatly assist in the matter of—well, in fact, I have already once offered my aid to the Express. And I stand ready now to join with it in giving the lie to those who are seeking to embarrass the present administration. Miss Carmen is with us—"

"Mr. Ames," the girl quietly interrupted, "I wish *you* were with *us*."

"But, my dear girl, have I—"

"For then there would be no more suffering in Avon," she added.

"Ha! Then it was you who wrote that misleading stuff in the Express, eh? I might have known it! May I ask," he added with a contemptuous sneer, "by whose authority you have visited the houses occupied by my tenants, without my permission or knowledge? I take it you were down there, although the cloudy weather must have quite dimmed your perception."

"Yes," she answered in a low voice, "I have been there. And it was *very* cloudy. Yes, I visited your charnel houses and your cemeteries. I saw your victims. I held their trembling hands, and stroked their hot brows. I fed them, and gave them the promise that I would plead their cause with you."

"Humph! But you first come here to—"

"It was with no thought of seeing you that I came to Washington, Mr. Ames. If I cross your path often, it must be for a purpose not yet revealed to either of us. Perhaps it is to warn you, to awaken you, if not too late, to a sense of your desperate state."

"My desperate state!"

"Yes. You are drunk, you know, drunk with greed. And such continuous drunkenness has made you sick unto death. It is the same dread disease of the soul that the wicked Cortez told the bewildered Mexicans he had, and that could be cured only with gold. You—you don't see, Mr. Ames, that you are mesmerized by the evil which is always using you."

She stood close to the huge man, and looked straight up into his face. He remained for a moment motionless, yielding again to that fascination which always held him when in her

presence, and of which he could give no account to himself. That slight, girlish figure—how easily he could crush her!

"But you couldn't, you know," she said cryptically, as she shook her head.

"Couldn't what?" he demanded.

"Crush me."

He recoiled a step, struck by the sudden revelation that the girl had read his thought.

"You see, Mr. Ames," she continued, "what a craven error is before truth. It makes a coward of you, doesn't it? Your boasted power is only a mesmerism, which you throw like a huge net over your victims. You and they can break it, if you will."

"Miss Carmen!" exclaimed the President. "We really must consider our interview ended. Let us make an appointment for another day."

"I guess the appointment was made for to-day," the girl said softly. "And by a higher power than any of us. Mr. Ames is the type of man who is slowly turning our Republican form of government into a despotism of wealth. He boasts that his power is already greater than a czar's. You bow before it; and so the awful monster of privilege goes on unhampered, coiling its slimy tentacles about our national resources, our public utilities, and natural wealth. I—I can't see how you, the head of this great nation, can stand trembling by and see him do it. It is to me incomprehensible."

The President flushed. He made as if to reply, but restrained himself. Carmen gave no indication of leaving. A stern look then came into the President's face. He stood for a few minutes in thought. Then he turned again to his desk and sat down.

"Please be seated," he said, "both of you. I don't know what quarrel there is between you two, and I am not interested in it. But you, Miss Carmen, represent the press; Mr. Ames, business. The things which have been voiced here this morning must remain with us alone. Now let us see if we can not meet on common ground. Is the attitude of your newspaper, Miss Carmen, one of hostility toward great wealth?"

"The Express raises its voice only against the folly and wickedness of the human mind, not against personality," replied the girl.

"But you are attacking Mr. Ames."

"No. We attack only the human thought which manifests in him. We oppose the carnal thought which expresses itself in the folly, the madness of strife for excessive wealth. It is that strife that makes our hospitals and asylums a disgraceful

necessity. It makes the immigrant hordes of Europe flock here because they are attracted by the horrible social system which fosters the growth of great fortunes and makes their acquisition possible. Our alms-houses and prisons increase in number every year. It is because rich men misuse their wealth, trample justice under foot, and prostitute a whole nation's conscience."

"But the rich need not do that. They do not all—"

"It is a law of human thought," said Carmen in reply, "that mankind in time become like that which has absorbed their attention. Rich men obey this law with utmost precision. They acquire the nature and character of their god, gold. They rapidly grow to be like that which they blindly worship. They harden like their money. They grow metallic, yellow, calloused, unchanging, and soulless, like the coins they heap up. There is the great danger to our country, Mr. President. And it is against the human thought that produces such beings —thought stamped with the dollar mark—that the Express opposes itself."

She hesitated, and looked in the direction of Ames. Then she added:

"Their features in time reveal to the world their metallic thought. Their veins shrivel with the fiery lust of gold. Their arteries harden. And then, at last, they crumble and sink into the dust of which their god is made. And still their memories continue to poison the very sources of our national existence. You see," she concluded, "there is no fool so mired in his folly as the man who gives his soul for great wealth."

"A very enjoyable little sermon, preached for my benefit, Miss Carmen," interposed Ames, bowing to her. "And now if you have finished excoriating my poor character," he continued dryly, "will you kindly state by whose authority you publish to the world my affairs?"

"God's authority, Mr. Ames," returned the girl gently.

"Bah! The maudlin sentimentalism of such as you make us all suffer!" he exclaimed with a gesture of disgust. "Hadn't we better sing a hymn now? You're obsessed with your foolish religious notions! You're running amuck! You'll be wiser in a few years, I hope."

The girl reflected. "And may I ask, Mr. Ames, by what right you own mines, and forests, and lands? Divine right, I suppose."

"By the divine right of law, most assuredly," he retorted.

"And you make the law. Yes, divine right! I have learned," she continued, turning to the President, "that a bare handful of men own or control all the public utilities of this great

country. It doesn't seem possible! But," abruptly, "you believe in God, don't you?"

He nodded his head, although with some embarrassment. His religion labored heavily under political bias.

She looked down at the floor, and sat silent for a while. "Divine right," she began to murmur, "the fetish of the creatures made rich by our man-made social system! 'The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them.' But, oh, what must be the concept of God held by the rich, a God who bestows these gifts upon a few, and with them the privilege and divine consent to oppress and crush their fellow-men! What a low order of intelligence the rich possess! An intelligence wherein the sentiments of love and justice have melted into money!"

"Mr. President," put in Ames at this juncture, "I think we have spent quite enough time moralizing. Suppose you now indicate your attitude on the cotton tariff. I'd like to know what to expect."

Carmen glanced quickly up. Her sparkling eyes looked right into the President's. A smile wreathed her mouth. "I admire the man," she said, "who dares to stand for the right in the face of the great taboo! There are few men nowadays who stand for anything in particular."

"Look here!" exclaimed Ames, aware now that he had made a mistake in permitting the girl to remain, "I wish my interview to be with you alone, Mr. President."

Carmen rose. "I have embarrassed you both, haven't I?" she said. "I will go. But first—"

She went to Ames and laid a hand on his arm. "I wish—I wish I might awaken you," she said gently. "There is no victim at Avon in so desperate a state as you. More gold will not cure you, any more than more liquor can cure a slave to strong drink. You do not know that you are hourly practicing the most despicable form of robbery, the wringing of profits which you do not need out of the dire necessities of your fellow-beings."

She stopped and smiled down into the face of the man. His emotions were in a whirl. This girl always dissected his soul with a smile on her face.

"I wish I might awaken you and your poor victims by showing you and them that righteousness makes not for a home in the skies, but for greater happiness and prosperity for everybody right here in this world. Don't you really want the little babies to have enough to eat down there at Avon? Do you really want the President to support you in the matter of the

cotton schedule, and so increase the misery and sorrow at your mills? You don't know, do you? that one's greatest happiness is found only in that of others." She stood looking at him for a few moments, then turned away.

The President rose and held out his hand to her. She almost laughed as she took it, and her eyes shone with the light of her eager, unselfish desire.

"I—I guess I'm like Paul," she said, "consumed with zeal. Anyway, you'll wear my rose, won't you?"

"Indeed I will!" he said heartily.

"And—you are not a bit afraid about a second term, are you? As for party principle, why, you know, there is only *one* principle, God. He is the Christ-principle, you know, and that is way above party principle."

Under the spell of the girl's strange words every emotion fled from the men but that of amazement.

"Righteousness, you know, is right-thinking. And that touches just that about which men are most chary, their pocketbooks."

She still held his hand. Then she arched her brows and said naïvely: "You will find in yesterday's Express something about Avon. You will not use your influence with Congress until you have read it, will you?" And with that she left the room.

A deep quiet fell upon the men, upon the great executive and the great apostle of privilege. It seemed to the one that as the door closed against that bright presence the spirit of night descended; the other sat wrapped in the chaos of conflicting emotions in which she always left him.

Suddenly the President roused up. "Who is she?" he asked.

"She's the bastard daughter of a negro priest," replied Ames in an ugly tone.

"What—she? That beautiful girl—! I don't believe it!"

"By God, she is!" cried the thoroughly angered Ames, bringing a huge fist down hard upon the desk. "And I've got the proof! And, what's more, she's head over heels in love with another renegade priest!

"But that's neither here nor there," he continued savagely. "I want to know what you are going to do for us?"

"I—I do not see, Mr. Ames, that I can do anything," replied the President meditatively.

"Well—will you leave the details to us, and do as we tell you then?" the financier pursued, taking another tack.

The President hesitated. Then he raised his head. "You say you have proof?" he asked.

"Proof?"

"Yes—about the girl, you—"

"Damn the girl!" almost shouted Ames. "I've got proofs that will ruin her, and you too—and, by God, I'll use 'em, if you drive me to it! You seem to forget that you were elected to do our bidding, my friend!"

The President again lapsed into silence. For a long time he sat staring at the floor. Then he looked up. "It was wonderful," he said, "wonderful the way she faced you, like David before Goliath! There isn't a vestige of fear in her make-up. I—we'll talk this matter over some other time, Mr. Ames," he finished, rising abruptly.

"We'll talk it over now!" roared Ames, his self-control flying to the winds. "I can ruin you—make your administration a laughing-stock—and plunge this country into financial panic! Do you do as I say, or not?"

The President looked the angry man squarely in the eyes. "I do not," he answered quietly. "Good morning."

CHAPTER 13

"IT'S corking! Simply corking!" cried Haynerd, when he and Hitt had finished reading Carmen's report on her first few days in Washington. "Makes a fellow feel as if the best thing Congress could do would be to adjourn for about fifty years, eh? Such freak legislation! But she's a wonder, Hitt! And she's booming the Express to the skies! Say, do you know? she's in love, that girl is! That's why she is so—as the Mexicans say—*simpático.*"

"Eh? In love!" exclaimed Hitt. "Well, not with you, I hope!"

"No, unfortunately," replied Haynerd, assuming a dejected mien, "but with that Rincón fellow—and he a priest! He's got a son down in Cartagena somewhere, and he doesn't write to her either. She's told Sid the whole story, and he's working it up into a book during his odd moments. But, say," turning the conversation again into its original channel, "how much of her report are we going to run? You know, she tried to head us off. Doesn't want to attack Ames. Ha! ha! As if she hadn't already attacked him and strewn him all over the field!"

"We'll have to be careful in our allusions to the President," replied Hitt. "I'll rewrite it myself, so as not to offend her or him. And I—but, by George! her reports are the truth, and they rightfully belong to the people! The Express is the

avowed servant of the public! What she finds out belongs to all. I see no reason for concealing a thing. Did I tell you that I had two inquiries from Italian and German papers, asking permission to translate her reports into their own columns?"

"No? Jerusalem! We're becoming famous! Did you wire her to see Gossitch and Mall?"

"Yes, and Logue, as well as others. And I've put dozens of senators and congressmen on our mailing list, including the President himself. I've prepared letters for each one of them, calling attention to the girl and her unique reports. She certainly writes in a fascinating vein, doesn't she? Meanwhile, she's circulating around down there and advertising us in the best possible manner. We're a success, old man!" he finished, slapping the city editor roundly upon the back.

"Humph!" growled the latter. "Confine your enthusiasm to words, my friend. Say, what did you do about that liquid food advertisement?"

"Discovered that it was beer," replied Hitt, "and turned it firmly down."

"Well, isn't beer a food? Not that we care to advertise it, but—"

Hitt laughed. "When that fellow Claus smoothly tried to convince me that beer was a food, I sent a sample of his stuff to the Iles chemical laboratory for analysis. They reported ninety-four per cent water, four per cent alcohol—defined now as a poisonous drug—and about two per cent of possible food substance. If the beer had been of the first grade there wouldn't have been even the two per cent of solids. You know, I couldn't help thinking of what Carmen said about the beer that is advertised in brown bottles to preserve it from the deleterious effects of light. Light, you know, starts decay in beer. Well, light, according to Fuller, is 'God's eldest daughter.' Emerson says it is the first of painters, and that there is nothing so foul that intense light will not make it beautiful. Light destroys fermentation. Thus the light of truth destroys the fermentation which is supposed to constitute the human mind and body. So light tries to purify beer by breaking it up. The brewers have to put it into brown bottles to preserve its poisonous qualities. As Carmen says, beer simply can't stand the light. No evil can stand the light. Remarkable, isn't it?"

"Humph! It's astonishing that so many so-called reputable papers will take their advertising stuff. It's just as bad as patent medicine ads."

"Yes. And I note that the American public still spend their annual hundred million dollars for patent medicine dope. Most of this is spent by women, who are largely caught by the mail-

order trade. I learned of one exposure recently made where it was found that a widely advertised eye wash was composed of borax and water. The cost was somewhere about five cents a gallon, and it sold for a dollar an ounce. Nice little profit of some two hundred and fifty thousand per cent, and all done by the mesmerism of suggestive advertising. Shrewd business, eh? Nice example in morality. Speaking of parasites on society, Ames is not the only one!"

"And yet those fellows howl and threaten us with the boycott because we won't advertise their lies and delusions. It's as bad as ecclesiastical intolerance!"

Carmen spent a week in Washington. Then she returned to New York and went directly to Avon. What she did there can only be surmised by a study of her reports to Hitt, who carefully edited them and ran them in the Express. Again, after several days, she journeyed back to Washington. Her enthusiasm was boundless; her energy exhaustless; her industry ceaseless; and her persistency doggedly unshakable. In Washington she made her way unhindered among those whom she deemed essential to the work which she was doing. Doubtless her ability to do this and to gain an audience with whomsoever she might choose was in great part due to her beauty and charming simplicity, her grace of manner, and her wonderful and fearless innocence, combined with a mentality remarkable for its matured powers. Hitt and Haynerd groaned over her expenses, but promptly met them.

"She's worth it," growled the latter one day. "She's had four different talks with the President! How on earth do you suppose she does it? And how did she get Mall and Logue to take her to dinner and to the theater again and again? And what did she do to induce that doddering old blunderbuss, Gossitch, to tell her what Ames was up to? I'll bet he made love to her! How do you suppose she found out that Ames was hand in glove with the medical profession, and working tooth and nail to help them secure a National Bureau of Health? Say, do you know what that would do? It would foist allopathy upon every chick and child of us! Make medication, drugging, compulsory! Good heavens! Have we come to that in this supposedly free country? By the way, Hitt, Doctor Morton has been let out of the University. Fired! He says Ames did it because of his association with us. What do you think of that?"

"I think, my friend," replied Hitt, "that it is a very serious matter, and one that impinges heavily upon the rights of every one of us, when a roaring lion like Ames is permitted to run loose through our streets. Can nothing stop him!"

"I've centered my hopes in Carmen," sighed Haynerd. "She's my one last bet. If she can't stop him, then God himself can't!"

Hitt turned and went into his office. A few moments later he came out again and handed an opened letter to Haynerd. "Some notes she's sent from Washington. Mentions the National Bureau of Health project. It hasn't escaped her, you see. Say, will you tell me where she picks up her information?"

"The Lord gives it to her, I guess," said Haynerd, glancing over the letter. "What's this?

"'Reverend Borwell and Doctor Siler are down here lobbying for the National Bureau of Health bill. Also, Senator Gossitch dropped a remark to me yesterday which makes me believe that he and other Senators have been approached by Tetham with reference to sending an American ambassador to the Vatican. Mr. Ames favors this.'"

Haynerd handed the letter back to Hitt and plunged into the papers on his desk. "Don't say another word to me!" he exclaimed. "This country's going stark, staring mad! We're crazy, every mother's son of us!"

"It's the human mind that is crazy, Ned, because it is wholly without any basis of principle," returned Hitt with a sigh.

* * * * * *

"Doctor Siler! I beg your pardon!"

"Eh? Why, Miss Carmen!" exclaimed that worthy person, looking up from the gutter, whither he had hastened after his silk hat which had been knocked off by the encounter with the young girl who had rounded the corner of Ninth street into Pennsylvania avenue and plunged full into him.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Doctor! I was coming from the Smithsonian Institution, and I guess—"

"Don't mention it, Miss Carmen. It's a privilege to have my hat knocked off by such a radiant creature as you."

"But it was so stupid of me! Dreaming again! And I want to offer my—"

"Look here, Miss Carmen, just offer yourself as my guest at luncheon, will you? That will not only make amends, but place me hopelessly in your debt."

"Indeed I will!" exclaimed the girl heartily. "I was on my way to a restaurant."

"Then come with me. I've got a little place around the corner here that would have made Epicurus sit up nights inditing odes to it."

The girl laughed merrily, and slipped her arm through his. A few minutes later they were seated at a little table in a secluded corner of the doctor's favorite chophouse.

"By the way, I met a friend of yours a few minutes ago," announced the doctor, after they had given their orders. "He was coming out of the White House, and—were you ever in a miniature cyclone? Well, that was Ames! He blew me right off the sidewalk! So angry, he didn't see me. That's twice to-day I've been sent to the gutter!" He laughed heartily over his experiences, then added significantly: "You and he are both mental cyclones, but producing diametrically opposite effects."

Carmen remained seriously thoughtful. The doctor went on chatting volubly. "Ames and the President don't seem to be pulling together as well as usual. The President has come out squarely against him now in the matter of the cotton schedule. Ames declares that the result will be a general financial panic this fall. By the way, Mr. Sands, the Express correspondent, seems to be getting mighty close to administration affairs these days. Where did he get that data regarding a prospective National Bureau of Health, do you suppose?"

"I gave it to him," was the simple reply.

The doctor dropped his fork, and stared at the girl. "You!" he exclaimed. "Well—of course you naturally would be opposed to it. But—"

"Tell me," she interrupted, "tell me candidly just what you doctors are striving for, anyway. For universal health? Are your activities all quite utilitarian, or—is it money and monopoly that you are after? It makes a lot of difference, you know, in one's attitude toward you. If you really seek the betterment of health, then you are only honestly mistaken in your zeal. But if you are doing this to make money—and I think you are—then you are a lot of rascals, deserving defeat."

"Miss Carmen, do you impugn my motives?" He laughed lightly at the thought.

"N—well—" She hesitated. He began to color slightly under her keen scrutiny. "Well," she finally continued, "let's see. If you doctors have made the curative arts effective, and if you really do heal disease, then I must support you, of course. But, while there is nothing quite so important to the average mortal as his health, yet I know that there is hardly anything that has been dealt with in such a bungling way. The art of healing as employed by our various schools of medicine to-day is the result of ages and ages of experimentation and bitter experience, isn't it? And its cost in human lives is simply incalculable. No science is so speculative, none so hypothetical, as the so-called science of medicine."

"But we have had to learn," protested the doctor.

"Do you realize, Doctor," she resumed, "that the teaching

and preaching of disease for money is one of the greatest curses resting upon the world to-day? I never saw a doctor until I was on the boat coming to New York. And then I thought he was one of the greatest curiosities I had ever seen. I followed him about and listened to him talk to the passengers. And I learned that, like most of our young men, he had entered the practice of medicine under the pressure of dollars rather than altruism. Money is still the determining factor in the choice of a profession by our young men. And success and fortune in the medical profession, more than in any other, depend upon the credulity of the ignorant and helpless human mind."

"Do you deny that great progress has been made in the curative arts?" he demanded. "See what we have done with diphtheria, with typhoid, with smallpox, and malaria!"

"Surely, Doctor, you can not believe that the mere temporary removing of a disease is *real* healing! You render one lot of microbes innocuous, after thousands of years of experimentation, and leave mankind subject to the rest. Then you render another set harmless. Do you expect to go on that way, making set after set of microbes harmless to the human body, and thus in time, after millions of years, eradicate disease entirely? Do you think that people will then cease to die? All the time you are working only in matter and through material modes. Do you expect thereby to render the human sense of life immortal? I think a sad disappointment awaits you. Your patients get well, only to fall sick again. And death to you is still as inevitable as ever, despite your boasted successes, is it not so?"

He broke into a bantering laugh, but did not reply.

"Doctor, the human mind is self-inoculated. It suffers from auto-infection. It makes its own disease microbes. It will keep on making them, until it is educated out of itself, and taught to do better. Then it will give place to the real reflection of divine mind; and human beings will be no more. Why don't you realize this, you doctors, and get started on the right track? Your real work is in the *mental* realm. There you will find both cause and cure."

"Well, I for one have little respect for faith cure—"

"Nor I," she interposed. "Dependence upon material drugs, Doctor, is reliance upon the *phenomena* of the human mind. Faith cure is dependence upon the human mind itself, upon the *noumenon*, instead of the *phenomenon*. Do you see the difference? Hypnotism is mental suggestion, the suggestions being human and material, not divine truth. The drugging system is an outgrowth of the belief of life in matter. Faith

cure is the belief of life and power inherent in the human mind. One is no higher than the other. The origin of healing is shrouded in mythology, and every step of its so-called progress has been marked by superstition, dense ignorance, and fear. The first doctor that history records was the Shaman, or medicine-man, whose remedies reflected his mental status, and later found apt illustration in the brew concocted by Macbeth's witches. And think you he has disappeared? Unbelievable as it may seem, it was only a short time ago that a case was reported from New York where the skin of a freshly killed black cat was applied as a remedy for an ailment that had refused to yield to the prescribed drugging! And only a few years ago some one applied to the Liverpool museum for permission to touch a sick child's head with one of the prehistoric stone axes there exhibited."

"That was mere superstition," retorted the doctor.

"True," said Carmen. "But *materia medica* is superstition incarnate. And because of the superstition that life and virtue and power are resident in matter, mankind have swallowed nearly everything known to material sense, in the hope that it would cure them of their own auto-infection. You remember what awful recipes Luther gave for disease, and his exclamation of gratitude: 'How great is the mercy of God who has put such healing virtue in all manner of muck!' "

"Miss Carmen," resumed the doctor, "we physicians are workers, not theorists. We handle conditions as we find them, not as they ought to be."

"Oh, no, you don't!" laughed the girl. "You handle conditions as the human, mortal mind believes them to be, that's all. You accept its ugly pictures as real, and then you try desperately through legislation to make us all accept them. Yet you would bitterly resent it if some religious body should try to legislate its beliefs upon you.

"Now listen, you doctors are rank materialists. Perhaps it is because, as Hawthorne puts it, in your researches into the human frame your higher and more subtle faculties are materialized, and you lose the spiritual view of existence. Your only remedy for diseased matter is more matter. And these material remedies? Why, ignorance and superstition have given rise to by far the larger number of remedies in use by you to-day! And all of your attempts to rationalize medicine and place it upon a systematic basis have signally failed, because the only curative property a drug has is the credulity of the person who swallows it. And that is a factor which varies with the individual."

"The most advanced physicians give little medicine nowadays, Miss Carmen."

"They are beginning to get away from it, little by little," she replied. "In recent years it has begun to dawn upon doctors and patients alike that the sick who recover do so, not because of the drugs which they have taken, but *in spite of them!* One of the most prominent of our contemporary physicians who are getting away from the use of drugs has said that eighty-five per cent of all illnesses get well of their own accord, no matter what may or may not be done for them. In a very remarkable article from this same doctor's pen, in which he speaks of the huge undertaking which physicians must assume in order to clear away the *materia medica* rubbish of the ages, he states that the greatest struggle which the coming doctor has on his hands is with drugs, and the deadly grip which they have on the confidence and affections both of the profession and of the public. Among his illuminating remarks about the drug system, I found two drastic statements, which should serve to lift the veil from the eyes of the chronic drug taker. These are, first, 'Take away opium and alcohol, and the backbone of the patent medicine business would be broken inside of forty-eight hours,' and, second, 'No drug, save quinine and mercury in special cases, will cure a disease.' In words which he quotes from another prominent physician, 'He is the best doctor who knows the worthlessness of most drugs.'

"The hundreds of drugs listed in books on *materia medica* I find are gradually being reduced in number to a possible forty or fifty, and one doctor makes the radical statement that they can be cut down to the 'six or seven real drugs.' Still further light has been thrown upon the debasing nature of the drugging system by a member of the Philadelphia Drug Exchange, in a recent hearing before the House Committee on municipal affairs right here. He is reported as saying that it makes little difference what a manufacturer puts into a patent medicine, for, after all, the effect of the medicine depends upon the faith of the user. The sick man who turns to patent medicines for relief becomes the victim of 'bottled faith.' If his faith is sufficiently great, a cure may be effected—and the treatment has been *wholly mental!* The question of ethics does not concern either the patent medicine manufacturer or the druggist, for they argue that if the sick man's faith has been aroused to the point of producing a cure, the formula of the medicine itself is of no consequence, and, therefore, if a solution of sugar and water sold as a cure for colds can stimulate the sufferer's faith to the point of meeting his need, the business is quite legitimate. 'A bunch of bottles and sentiment,' adds this member of the Drug Exchange, 'are the real essentials for working healing miracles.'"

"Say!" exclaimed the doctor, again sitting back and regarding her with amazement. "You have a marvelous memory for data!"

"But, Doctor, I am intensely interested in my fellow-men. I want to help them, and show them how to learn to live."

"So am I," he returned. "And I am doing all I can, the very best I know how to do."

"I guess you mean you are doing what you are prompted to do by every vagrant impulse that happens to stray into your mentality, aren't you?" she said archly. "You haven't really seriously thought out your way, else you would not be here now urging Congress to spread a blanket of ignorance over the human mind. If you will reflect seriously, if you will lay aside monetary considerations, and a little of the hoary prejudice of the ages, and will carefully investigate our present medical systems, you will find a large number of schools of medicine, bitterly antagonistic to one another, and each accusing the other of inferiority as an exact science, and as grossly ignorant and reprehensibly careless of life. But which of these warring schools can show the greatest number of cures is a bit of data that has never been ascertained. A recent writer says: 'As important as we all realize health to be, the public is receiving treatment that is anything but scientific, and the amount of unnecessary suffering that is going on in the world is certainly enough to make a rock shed tears.' He further says that, 'at least seventy-five per cent of the people we meet who are apparently well, are suffering from some chronic ailment that regular medical systems can not cure,' and that many of these would try further experimentation were it not for the criticism that is going on in the medical world regarding various curative systems. The only hope under the drugging system is that the patient's life and purse may hold out under the strain of trying everything until he can light upon the right thing before he reaches the end of the list."

"And do you include surgery in your general criticism?" he asked.

"Surgery is no less an outgrowth of the belief of sentient matter than is the drugging system," she replied. "It is admittedly necessary in the present stage of the world's thought; but it is likewise admitted to be 'the very uncertain art of performing operations,' at least ninety per cent of which are wholly unnecessary.

"You see," she went on, "the effect upon the *moral* nature of the sick man is never considered as rightfully having any influence upon the choice of the system to be employed. If Beelzebub can cast out demons, why not employ him? For,

after all, the end to be attained is the ejection of the demon. And if God had not intended minerals and plants to be used as both food and medicine, why did He make them? Besides, man must earn his bread in some way under our present crude and inhuman social system, and if the demand for drugs exists we may be very sure it will be supplied by others, if not by ourselves. Again, the influence of commercialism as a determining factor in the choice of a profession, is an influence that works to keep many in the practice of a profession that they know to be both unscientific and harmful. The result is an inevitable lowering of ideals to the lust of material accumulation."

"Well!" he exclaimed. "You certainly are hard on us poor doctors! And we have done so much for you, too, despite your accusations. Think of the babies that are now saved from diphtheria alone!"

"And think of the children who are the victims of the medical mania!" she returned. "Think how they are brought up under the tyranny of fear! Fear of this and of that; fear that if they scratch a finger blood poisoning will deprive them of life; fear that eating a bit of this will cause death; or sitting in a breeze will result in wasting sickness! Isn't it criminal? As for diphtheria antitoxin, it is in the same class as the white of an egg. It contains no chemicals. It is the result of human belief, the belief that a horse that has recovered from diphtheria can never again be poisoned by the microbe of that disease. The microbe, Doctor, is the externalization in the human mentality of the mortal beliefs of fear, of life and power in matter, and of disease and death. The microbe will be subject, therefore, to the human mind's changing thought regarding it, always."

"Well then," said the doctor, "if people are spiritual, and if they really are a consciousness, as you say, why do we seem to be carrying about a body with us all the time—a body from which we are utterly unable to get away?"

"It is because the mortal mind and body are one, Doctor. The body is a lower stratum of the human mind. Hence, the so-called mind is never distinct from its body to the extent of complete separation, but always has its substratum with it. And, Doctor, the mind can not hold a single thought without that thought tending to become externalized—as Professor James tells us—and the externalization generally has to do with the body, for the mind has come to center all its hopes of happiness and pleasure in the body, and to base its sense of life upon it. The body, being a mental concept formed of false thought, passes away, from sheer lack of a definite principle

upon which to rest. Therefore the sense of life embodied in it passes away with it. You know, the ancients had some idea of the cause of disease when they attributed it to demons, for demons at least are mental influences. But then, after that, men began to believe that disease was sent by God, either to punish them for their evil deeds, or to discipline and train them for paradise. Funny, isn't it? Think of regarding pain and suffering as divine agents! I don't wonder people die, do you? Humboldt, you know, said: 'The time will come when it will be considered a disgrace for a man to be sick, when the world will look upon it as a misdemeanor, the result of some vicious thinking.' Many people seem to think that thought affects only the brain; but the fact is that *we think all over!*"

"But look here," put in the doctor. "Here's a question I intended to ask Hitt the other night. He said the five physical senses did not testify truly. Well now, if, as you say, the eyes do not testify to disease, then they can't testify to cures either, eh?" He sat back with an air of triumph.

"Quite correct," replied Carmen. "The physical senses testify only to belief. In the case of sickness, they testify to false belief. In the case of a cure, they testify to a changed belief, to a belief of recovered health, that is all. It is all on the basis of human belief, you see."

"Eh? But—nerves feel—"

"Nerves, Doctor, like all matter, are externalizations of human thought. Can the externalization of thought talk back to thought? No. You are still on the basis of mere human belief."

At that moment the doctor leaned over and tapped upon the window to attract the attention of some one in the street. Carmen looked out and caught sight of a tall, angular man dressed in clerical garb. The man bowed pleasantly to the doctor, and cast an inquiring glance at the girl, then passed on.

"A priest?" inquired Carmen.

"Yes, Tetham," said the doctor.

"Oh, is that the man who maintains the lobby here at the Capital for his Church? I've heard about him. He—well, it is his business to see that members of his Church are promoted to political office, isn't it? He trades votes of whole districts to various congressmen in return for offices for strong church members. He also got the parochial schools of New York exempt from compulsory vaccination. The Express—"

"Eh? The Express has heard from him?" inquired the doctor.

"Yes. We opposed the candidate Mr. Ames was supporting for Congress. We also supported Mr. Wales in his work on the cotton schedule. And so we heard from Father Tetham.

He is supporting the National Bureau of Health bill. He is working for the Laetare medal. He—"

"Say, Miss Carmen, will you tell me where you pick up your news? Really, you astonish me! Do you know something about everybody here in Washington?"

She laughed. "I have learned much here," she said, "about popular government as exemplified by these United States. The knowledge is a little saddening. But it is especially saddening to see our constitutional liberties threatened by this Bureau of Health bill, and by the Government's constant truckling to the Church of Rome. Doctor, can it be that you want to commit this nation to the business of practicing medicine, and to its practice according to the allopathic, or 'regular' school? The American Medical Association, with its reactionary policies and repressive tendencies, is making strenuous endeavors to influence Congress to enact certain measures which would result in the creation of such a Department of Health, the effect of which would be to monopolize the art of healing and to create a 'healing trust.' If this calamity should be permitted to come upon the American people, it would fall as a curtain of ignorance and superstition over our fair land, and shut out the light of the dawning Sun of Truth. It would mean a reversion to the blight and mold of the Middle Ages, in many respects a return in a degree to the ignorance and tyranny that stood for so many centuries like an impassable rock in the pathway of human progress. The attempt to foist upon a progressive people a system of medicine and healing which is wholly unscientific and uncertain in its effects, but which is admittedly known to be responsible for the death of millions and for untold suffering and misery, and then to say, *'Thou shalt be cured thereby, or not be cured at all,'* is an insult to the intelligence of the Fathers of our liberties, and a crime upon a people striving for the light. It smacks of the Holy Inquisition: You accept our creed, or you shall go to hell—after we have broken you on the rack! Why, the thought of subjecting this people to years of further dosing and experimentation along the materialistic lines of the 'regular' school, of curtailing their liberties, and forcing their necks under the yoke of medical tyranny, should come to them with the insistence of a clarion call, and startle them into such action that the subtle evil which lurks behind this proposed legislative action would be dragged out into the light and exterminated! To permit commercialism and greed, the lust of mammon, and the pride of the flesh that expresses itself in the demand, 'Who shall be greatest?' to dictate the course of conduct that shall shape the destinies of a great people, is to admit the failure of

free government, and to revert to a condition of mind that we had thought long since outgrown. To yield our dear-bought liberties to Italian ecclesiastics, on the other hand—well, Doctor, *it is just unthinkable!*"

"H'm! Well, at least you are delightfully frank with me. Yet you have the effect of making me feel as if—as if I were in some way behind a veil. That—"

"Well, the human mind is very decidedly behind a veil—indeed, behind many of them. And how can it see God through them? Mankind just grope about all their lives back of these veils, not knowing that God is right before them all the time. God has got to be everything, or else He will be nothing. With or without drugs, it is God 'who healeth all thy diseases.' The difficulty with physicians is that they are densely ignorant of what healing means, and so they always start with a dreadful handicap. They believe that there is something real to be overcome—and of course fail to permanently overcome it. Many of them are not only pitiably ignorant, but are in the profession simply to make money out of the fears and credulity of the people. Doctor, the physician of to-day is in no way qualified to handle the question of public health—especially those doctors who say: 'If you won't take our medicines we'll get a law passed that will make you take them.' To place the health of the people in their hands would be a terrible mistake. The agitation for a federal Department of Health is based upon motives of ignorance and intentional wrong. If the people generally knew this, they would rise in a body against it. Make what laws you wish for yourself, Doctor. The human mind is constantly occupied in the making of ridiculous laws and limitations. But do not attempt to foist your laws upon the people. Tell me, why all this agitation about teaching sex-hygiene in the public schools? Why not, for a change, teach Christianity? What would be the result? But even the Bible has been put out of the schools. And by whom? By your Church, that its interpretation may continue to be falsely made by those utterly and woefully ignorant of its true meaning!"

For some moments they continued their meal in silence. Then the girl took up the conversation again. "Doctor," she said, "will you come out from among them and be separate?"

He looked at her quizzically. "Oppose Ames?" he finally said.

"Ah, that is the rub, then! Yes, oppose ignorance and falsity, even though incarnate in Mr. Ames," she replied.

"He would ruin me!" exclaimed the doctor. "He ruins everybody who stands in his way! The cotton schedule has gone against him, and the whole country will have to suffer for it!"

"But how can he make the country suffer because he has been blocked in his colossal selfishness?" she asked.

"That I can not answer," said the doctor. "But I do know that he has intimated that there will be no cotton crop in this country next year."

"No cotton crop! Why, how can he prevent that?"

The doctor shook his head. "Mr. Ames stands as the claim of omnipotent evil," was his laconic reply.

And when the meal was ended, the girl went her way, pondering deeply. "No cotton crop! What—what did he mean?" But that was something too dark to be reported to the Express.

* * * * * *

Three weeks from the day he had his brush with Carmen in the presence of the President, Ames, the great corruptionist, the master manipulator, again returned from a visit to Washington, and in a dangerous frame of mind. What might have been his mental state had he known that the train which drew his private car also brought Carmen back to New York, can only be conjectured. It was fortunate, no doubt, that both were kept in ignorance of that fact, and that, while the great externalization of the human mind's "claim" of business sulked alone in his luxurious apartments, the little follower after righteousness sat in one of the stuffy day coaches up ahead, holding tired, fretful babies, amusing restless children, and soothing away the long hours to weary, care-worn mothers.

When the financier's car drew into the station his valets breathed great sighs of relief, and his French chef and negro porter mopped the perspiration from their troubled brows, while silently offering peans of gratitude for safe delivery. When the surly giant descended the car steps his waiting footman drew back in alarm, as he caught his master's black looks. When he threw himself into the limousine, his chauffeur drew a low whistle and sent a timidly significant glance in the direction of the lackey. And when at last he flung open the doors of his private office and loudly summoned Hood, that capable and generally fearless individual quaked with dire foreboding.

"The Express—I want a libel suit brought against it at once! Draw it for half a million! File it in Judge Penny's court!"

"Yes, sir," responded the lawyer meekly. "The grounds?"

"Damn the grounds!" shouted Ames. Then, in a voice trembling with anger: "Have you read the last week's issues? Then find your grounds in them! Make that girl a defendant too!"

"She has no financial interest in the paper, sir. And, as for

the reports which they have published—I hardly think we can establish a case from them—"

"What? With Judge Penny sitting? If you and he can't make out a case against them, then I'll get a judge and a lawyer who can! I want that bill filed to-morrow!" bringing his fist down upon the desk.

"Very well, sir," assented Hood, stepping back.

"Another thing," continued Ames, "see Judge Hanson and have the calling of the Ketchim case held in abeyance until I am ready for it. I've got a scheme to involve that negro wench in the trial, and drag her through the gutters! So, she's still in love with Rincón, eh? Well, we'll put a crimp in that little affair, I guess! Has Willett heard from Wenceslas?"

"Not yet, sir."

"I'll lift the scalp from that blackguard Colombian prelate if he tries to trick me! Has Willett found Lafelle's whereabouts?"

"No, sir. But the detectives report that he has been in Spain recently."

"Spain! What's he—up to there?" he exclaimed in a voice that began high and ended in a whisper.

He lapsed into a reflective mood, and for some moments his thoughts seemed to wander far. Then he pulled himself together and roused out of his meditations.

"You told Jayne that I would back the Budget to any extent, provided it would publish the stuff I sent it?"

"Yes, sir. He was very glad to accept your offer."

"Very well. You and Willett set about at once getting up daily articles attacking the Express. I want you to dig up every move ever made by Hitt, Haynerd, that girl, Waite, Morton, and the whole miserable, sneaking outfit! Rake up every scandal, every fact, or rumor, that is in any way associated with any of them. I want them literally cannonaded by the Budget! Hitt's a renegade preacher! Haynerd was a bum before he got the Social Era! Waite is an unfrocked priest! Miss Wall's father was a distiller! That girl—that girl is a—Did you know that she used to be in a brothel down in the red-light district? Well, she did! Great record the publishers of the Express have, eh? Now, by God! I want you and Jayne to bury that whole outfit under a mountain of mud! I'm ready to spend ten millions to do it! Kill 'em! Kill 'em all!"

"I think we can do it, Mr. Ames," returned the lawyer confidently.

"You've got to! Now, another matter: I'm out to get the President's scalp! He's got to go down! Begin with those New York papers which we can influence. I'll get Fallom and

Adams over here for a conference. Meanwhile, think over what we'd better say to them. Our attacks upon the President must begin at once! I've already bought up a Washington daily for that purpose. They have a few facts now that will discredit his administration!"

"Very well, Mr. Ames. Ah—a—there is a matter that I must mention as soon as you are ready to hear it, Mr. Ames—regarding Avon. It seems that the reports which that girl has made have been translated into several languages, and are being used by labor agitators down there to stir up trouble. The mill hands, you know, never really understood what your profits were, and—well, they have always been quite ignorant, you know, regarding any details of the business. But now they think they have been enlightened—they think they see how the tariff has benefited you at their expense—and they are extremely bitter against you. That priest, Father Danny, has been doing a lot of talking since the girl was down there."

"By God!" cried Ames, rising from his chair, then sinking back again.

"You see, Mr. Ames," the lawyer continued, "the situation is fast becoming acute. The mill hands don't believe now that you were ever justified in shutting down, or putting them on half time. And, whether you reduce wages or not, they are going to make very radical demands upon you in the near future, unless I am misinformed. These demands include better working conditions, better tenements, shorter hours, and very much higher wages. Also the enforcement of the child labor law, I am sorry to say."

"They don't dare!" shouted Ames.

"But, after all, Mr. Ames, you know you have said that it would strengthen your case with Congress if there should be a strike at Avon."

"But not now! Not now!" cried Ames. "It would ruin everything! I am distinctly out of favor with the President—owing to that little negro wench! And Congress is going against me if I lose Gossitch, Logue, and Mall! That girl has put me in bad down there! Wales is beginning to threaten! By G—"

"But, Mr. Ames, she can be removed, can she not?"

"Violence would still further injure us. But—if we can drive the Express upon the shoals, and then utterly discredit that girl, either in the libel suit or the Ketchim trial, why, then, with a little show of bettering things at Avon, we'll get what we want. But we've got work before us. Say, is—is Sidney with the Express?" he added hesitatingly.

Hood started, and shot a look of mingled surprise and curiosity at his master. Was it possible that Ames—

"You heard my question, Mr. Hood?"

"I—I beg pardon! Yes, sir—Sidney is still with them. He—a—they say he has quite conquered his—his—"

"You mean, he's no longer a sot?" Ames asked brutally. "Out with it, man! Don't sit there like a smirking Chinese god!"

"Well, Mr. Ames, I learn that Sidney has been cured of his habits, and that the—that girl—did it," stammered the nervous lawyer.

Ames's mouth jerked open—and then snapped shut. Silence held him. His head slowly sank until his chin touched his breast. And as he sat thus enwrapped, Hood rose and noiselessly left the room.

Alone sat the man of gold—ah, more alone than even he knew. Alone with his bruised ambitions, his hectored egoism, his watery aims. Alone and plotting the ruin of those who had dared bid him halt in his mad, destroying career. Alone, this high priest of the caste of absolutism, of the old individualism which is fast hurrying into the realm of the forgotten. Alone, and facing a new century, with whose ideals his own were utterly, stubbornly, hopelessly discrepant.

Alone he sat, looking out, unmoved, upon the want and pain of countless multitudes gone down beneath the yoke of conditions which he had made too hard for them. Looking, unmoved, unhearing, upon the bitter struggles of the weak, the ignorant, the unskilled, the gross hewers of wood and drawers of water. Looking, and knowing not that in their piteous cry for help and light was sounded his own dire peril.

The door opened, and the office boy announced the chief stenographer of the great bank below. Ames looked up and silently nodded permission for the man to enter.

"Mr. Ames," the clerk began, "I—I have come to ask a favor—a great favor. I am having difficulty—considerable difficulty in securing stenographers, but—I may say—my greatest struggle is with myself. I—Mr. Ames, I can not—I simply can not continue to hire stenographers at the old wage, nine dollars a week! I know how these girls are forced to live. Mr. Ames, with prices where they are now, they can not live on that! May I not offer them more? Say, ten or twelve dollars to start with?"

Ames looked at him fixedly. "Why do you come to me with your request?" he asked coldly. "Your superior is Mr. Doan."

"Yes, sir, I know," replied the young man with hesitation. "But—I—did speak to him about it, and—he refused."

"I can do nothing, sir," returned Ames in a voice that chilled the man's life-current.

"Then I shall resign, Mr. Ames! I refuse to remain here and hire stenographers at that criminal wage!"

"Very well, sir," replied Ames in the same low, freezing tone. "Hand your resignation to Mr. Doan. Good day, sir."

Again the guardian of the sanctity of private property was left alone. Again, as he lapsed into dark revery, his thought turned back upon itself, and began the reconstruction of scenes and events long since shadowy dreams. And always as they built, the fair face of that young girl appeared in the fabric. And always as he retraced his course, her path crossed and crossed again his own. Always as he moved, her reflection fell upon him—not in shadow, but in a flood of light, exposing the secret recesses of his sordid soul.

He dwelt again upon the smoothness of his way in those days, before her advent, when that group of canny pirates sat about the Beaubien's table and laid their devious snares. It was only the summer before she came that this same jolly company had merged their sacred trust assets to draw the clouds which that autumn burst upon the country as the worst financial panic it had known in years. And so shrewdly had they planned, that the storm came unheralded from a clear sky, and at a time when the nation was never more prosperous.

He laughed. It had been rich fun!

And then, the potato scheme. They had wagered that he could not put it through. How neatly he had turned the trick, filled his pockets, and transformed their doubts into wondering admiration! It had been rare pleasure! Oh, yes, there had been some suffering, he had been told. He had not given that a thought.

And the Colombian revolution! How surprised the people of these United States would be some day to learn that this tropic struggle was in essence an American war! The smug and unthinkingly contented in this great country of ours regarded the frenzied combat in the far South as but a sort of *opéra bouffe*. What fools, these Americans! And he, when that war should end, would control navigation on the great Magdalena and Cauca rivers, and acquire a long-term lease on the emerald mines near Bogotá. The price? Untold suffering —countless broken hearts—indescribable, maddening torture—he had not given that a thought.

He laughed again.

But he was tired, very tired. His trip to Washington had been exhausting. He had not been well of late. His eyes had been bloodshot, and there had been several slight hemorrhages from the nose. His physician had shaken his head gravely, and had admonished him to be careful—

But why did that girl continue to fascinate him? he wondered. Why now, in all his scheming and plotting, did he always see her before him? Was it only because of her rare physical beauty? If he wrote or read, her portrait lay upon the page; if he glanced up, she stood there facing him. There was never accusation in her look, never malice, nor trace of hate. Nor did she ever threaten. No; but always she smiled—always she looked right into his eyes—always she seemed to say, "You would destroy me, but yet I love you."

God! What a plucky little fighter she was! And she fought him fairly. Aye, much more so than he did her. She would scorn the use of his methods. He had to admit *that,* though he hated her, detested her, would have torn her into shreds—even while he acknowledged that he admired her, yes, beyond all others, for her wonderful bravery and her loyal stand for what she considered the right.

He must have dozed while he sat there in the warm office alone. Surely, that hideous object now floating before his straining gaze, that thing resembling the poor, shattered Mrs. Hawley-Crowles, was not real! It was but a shadow, a flimsy thing of thought! And that woestricken thing there, with its tenuous arms extended toward him—was that Gannette? Heavens, no! Gannette had died, stark mad! But, that other shade—so like his wife, a few months dead, yet alive again! Whence came that look of horror in a face once so haughty! It was unreal, ghastly unreal, as it drifted past! Ah, now he knew that he was dreaming, for there, there in the light stood Carmen! Oh, what a blessed relief to see that fair image there among those other ghastly sights! He would speak to her—

But—*God above! What was that?* A woman—no, not Carmen—fair and—

Her white lips moved—they were transparent—he could see right through them—and great tears dropped from her bloodless cheeks when her accusing look fell upon him!

Slowly she floated nearer—she stopped before him, and laid a hand upon his shoulder—it was cold, cold as ice! He tried to call out—to rise—to break away—

And then, groaning aloud, and with his brow dripping perspiration, he awoke.

Hood entered, but stopped short when he saw his master's white face. "Mr. Ames! You are ill!" he cried.

Ames passed a hand across his wet forehead. "A—a little tired, that's all, I guess. What now?"

The lawyer laid a large envelope upon the desk. "It has come," he said. "There's a delegation of Avon mill hands in the outer office. Here are their demands. It's just what I thought."

Ames slowly took up the envelope. For a moment he hesitated. Again he seemed to see that smiling girl before him. His jaw set, and his face drew slowly down into an expression of malignity. Then, without examining its contents, he tore the envelope into shreds, and cast the pieces into the waste basket.

"Put them out of the office!" he commanded sharply. "Wire Pillette at once to discharge these fellows, and every one else concerned in the agitation! If those rats down there want to fight, they'll find me ready!"

CHAPTER 14

THE immense frame of J. Wilton Ames bent slightly, and the great legs might have been seen to drag a bit, as the man entered his private elevator the morning after his rejection of the mill hands' demands, and turned the lever that caused the lift to soar lightly to his office above. And a mouse —had the immaculate condition of his luxurious *sanctum* permitted such an alien dweller—could have seen him sink heavily into his great desk chair, and lapse into deep thought. Hood, Willett, and Hodson entered in turn; but the magnate gave them scant consideration, and at length waved them all away, and bent anew to his meditations.

Truth to tell—though he would not have owned it—the man was now dimly conscious of a new force at work upon him; of a change, slowly, subtly taking place somewhere deep within. He was feebly cognizant of emotions quite unknown; of unfamiliar sentiments, whose outlines were but just crystallizing out from the thick magma of his materialistic soul.

And he fought them; he hated them; they made him appear unto himself weak, even effeminate! His abhorrence of sentimentalism had been among the strongest of his life-characteristics; and yet, though he could not define it, a mellowing something seemed to be acting upon him that dull, bitterly cold winter morning, that shed a soft glow throughout his mental chambers, that seemed to touch gently the hard, rugged things of thought that lay within, and soften away their sharp outlines. He might not know what lay so heavily upon his thought, as he sat there alone, with his head sunk upon his breast. And yet the girl who haunted his dreams would have told him that it was an interrogation, even the eternal question, "What shall it profit a man—?"

Suddenly he looked up. The door had opened, he thought. Then he sat bolt upright and stared.

"Good morning, Mr. Ames. May I come in?"

Come in! Had ever such heavenly music touched his ears before! This was not another dream! The vision this time was real! He sprang to his feet. He would have held out his arms to her if he could.

And yet, how dared she come to him? How dared she, after what she had done? Was this fresh affrontery? Had she come again to flout him? To stand within the protection which her sex afforded and vivisect anew his tired soul? But, whatever her motives, this girl did the most daring things he had ever seen a woman do.

"Isn't it funny," she said, as she stood before him with a whimsical little smile, "that wherever I go people so seldom ask me to sit down!"

Ames sank back into his seat without speaking. Carmen stood for a moment looking about her rich environment; then drew up a chair close to him.

"You haven't the slightest idea why I have come here, have you?" she said sweetly, looking up into his face.

"I must confess myself quite ignorant of the cause of this unexpected pleasure," he returned guardedly, bending his head in mock deference, while the great wonder retained possession of him.

"Well," she went on lightly, "will you believe me when I tell you that I have come here because I love you?"

Aha! A dark suspicion sprang up within him. So this was an attack from a different quarter! Hitt and Haynerd had invoked her feminine wiles, eh?

Nonsense! With one blow the unfamiliar sentiment which had been shedding its influence upon him that morning laid the ugly suspicion dead at his feet. A single glance into that sweet face turned so lovingly up to his brought his own deep curse upon himself for his hellish thought.

"You know," she bubbled, with a return of her wonted airy gaiety, "I just had to run the gauntlet through guards and clerks and office boys to get here. Aren't you glad I didn't send in my card? For then you would have refused to see me, wouldn't you?"

"I would not!" he replied harshly. Then he repented his tone. "If I had known you were out there," he said more gently, "I'd have sent out and had you dragged in. I—I have wanted something this morning; and now I am sure it was—"

"Yes," she interrupted, taking the words out of his mouth, "you wanted *me*. I knew you would. You see, it's just absolutely impossible to oppose anybody who loves you. You know, that's the very method Jesus gave for overcoming our enemies

—to love them, just love them to pieces, until we find that we haven't any enemies at all any more. Isn't it simple? My! Well, that's the way I've been doing with you—just loving you."

The man's brows knotted, and his lips tightened. Was this girl ridiculing him? Or was there aught but the deepest sincerity expressed in the face from which he could not take his eyes? Impossible! And yet, did ever human being talk so strangely, so weirdly, as she?

He bent a little closer to her. "Did you say that you loved me?" he asked. "I thought you looked upon me as a human monster." After all, there was a note of pathos in the question. Carmen laid her hand upon his.

"It's the *real* you that I love," she answered gently. "The monster is only human thought—the thought that has seemed to mesmerize you. But you are going to throw off the mesmerism, aren't you? I'll help you," she added brightly. "You're going to put off the 'old man' completely—and you're going to begin by opening yourself and letting in a little love for those poor people down at Avon, aren't you? Yes, you are!"

At the mention of the people of Avon his face became stern and dark. And yet she spoke of them alone. She had not mentioned the Beaubien, Miss Wall, the Express, nor herself. He noted this, and wondered.

"You see, you don't understand, Mr. Ames. You'll be, oh, so surprised some day when you learn a little about the laws of thought—even the way human thought operates! For you can't possibly do another person an injury without that injury flying back and striking you. It's a regular boomerang! You may not feel the effects of its return right away—but it does return, and the effects accumulate. And then, some day, when you least expect it, comes the crash! But, when you love a person, why, that comes back to you too; and it never comes alone. It just brings loads of good with it. It helps you, and everybody. Oh, Mr. Ames," she cried, suddenly rising and seizing both his hands, "you've just *got* to love those people down there! You can't help it, even if you think you can, for hate is not real—it's an awful delusion!"

It was not so much an appeal which the girl made as an affirmation of things true and yet to come. The mighty *Thou shalt not!* which Moses laid upon his people, when transfused by the omnipotent love of the Christ was transformed from a clanking chain into a silken cord. The restriction became a prophecy; for when thou hast yielded self to the benign influence of the Christ-principle, then, indeed, thou shalt not desire to break the law of God.

Carmen returned to her chair, and sat eagerly expectant. Ames groped within his thought for a reply. And then his mental grasp closed upon the words of Hood.

"They are very bitter against me—they hate me!" he retorted lamely.

"Ah, yes," she said quickly. "They reflect in kind your thought of them. Your boomerangs of greed, of exploitation, of utter indifference which you have hurled at them, have returned upon you in hatred. Do you know that hatred is a fearful poison? And do you know that another's hatred resting upon you is deadly, unless you know how to meet and neutralize it with love? For love is the neutralizing alkaloid."

"Love is—weakness," he said in a low tone. "That kind, at least."

"Love weakness! Oh! Why, there is no such mighty power in the whole universe as love! It is omnipotent! It is hatred that is weak!"

Ames made a little gesture of contempt. "We argue from different standpoints," he said. "I am a plain, matter-of-fact, cold-blooded business man. There is no love in business!"

"And that," she replied in a voice tinged with sadness, "is why business is such chaos; why there is so much failure, so much anxiety, fear, loss, and unhappiness in the business world. Mr. Ames, you haven't the slightest conception of real business, have you?"

She sat for a moment in thought. Then, brightly, "I am in business, Mr. Ames—"

"Humph! I am forced to agree with you there! The business of attempting to annihilate me!"

"I am in the business of reflecting good to you, and to all mankind," she gently corrected.

"Then suppose you manifest your love for me by refraining from meddling further in my affairs. Suppose from now on you let me alone."

"Why—I am not meddling with you, Mr. Ames!"

"No?" He opened a drawer of the desk and took out several copies of the Express. "I am to consider that this is not strictly meddling, eh?" he continued, as he laid the papers before her.

"No, not at all," she promptly replied. "That's uncovering evil, so's it can be destroyed. All that evil, calling itself you and your business, has got to come to the surface—has got to come up to the light, so that it can be—"

"Ah! I see. Then I, the monster, must be exposed, eh? And afterward destroyed. A very pretty little idea! And the mines and mills which I own—"

"You own nothing, Mr. Ames, except by consent of the people whom you oppress. They will wake up some day; and then state and national ownership of public utilities will come, forced by such as you."

"And that desideratum will result in making everybody honest, I suppose?"

"No," she answered gravely. "We must go deeper than that. All our present troubles, whether domestic, business, civic, or social, come from a total misapprehension of the nature of God—a misunderstanding of what is really *good*. We have *all* got to prove Him. And we are very foolish to lose any more time setting about it, don't you think so?

"You see," she went on, while he sat studying her, "those poor people down at Avon don't know any more about what is the real good than you do. And that's why their thoughts and yours center upon the false pleasures of this ephemeral existence called life—this existence of the so-called physical senses—and why you both become the tools of vice, disease, and misfortune. They build up such men as you, and then you turn about and crush them. And in the end you are both what the Bible says—poor, deluded fools."

"Well, I'll be—"

"Oh, don't swear!" she pleaded, again seizing his hand and laughing up into his face. But then her smile vanished.

"It's time you started to prove God," she said earnestly. "Won't you begin now—to-day? Haven't you yet learned that evil is the very stupidest, dullest, most uninteresting thing in the world? It is, really. Won't you turn from your material endeavors now, and take time to learn to really live? You've got plenty of time, you know, for you aren't obliged to work for a living."

She was leaning close to him, and her breath touched his cheek. Her soft little hand lay upon his own. And her great, dark eyes looked into his with a light which he knew, despite his perverted thought, came from the unquenchable flame of her selfless love.

Again that unfamiliar sentiment—nay, rather, that sentiment long dormant—stirred within him. Again his worldly concepts, long entrenched, instantly rose to meet and overthrow it. He had not yet learned to analyze the thoughts which crept so silently into his ever-open mentality. To all alike he gave free access. And to those which savored of things earthy he still gave the power to build, with himself as a willing tool.

"You will—help me—to live?" he said. He thought her the most gloriously beautiful object he had ever known, as she sat there before him, so simply gowned, and yet clothed with that which all the gold of Ophir could not have bought.

"Yes, gladly—oh, so gladly!" Her eyes sparkled with a rush of tears.

"Don't you think," he said gently, drawing his chair a little closer to her, "that we have quite misunderstood each other? I am sure we have."

"Perhaps so," she answered thoughtfully. "But," with a happy smile again lighting her features, "we can understand each other now, can't we?"

"Of course we can! And hasn't the time come for us to work together, instead of continuing to oppose each other?"

"Yes! yes, indeed!" she cried eagerly.

"I—I have been thinking so ever since I returned yesterday from Washington. I am—I—"

"We need each other, don't we?" the artless girl exclaimed, as she beamed upon him.

"I am positive of it!" he said with suggestive emphasis. "I can help you—more than you realize—and I want to. I—I've been sorry for you, little girl, mighty sorry, ever since that story got abroad about—"

"Oh, never mind that!" she interrupted happily. "We are living in the present, you know."

"True—and in the future. But things haven't been right for you. And I want to see them straightened out. And you and I can do it, little one. Madam Beaubien hasn't been treated right, either. And—"

"There!" she laughed, holding up a warning finger. "We're going to forget that in the good we're going to do, aren't we?"

"Yes, that's so. And you are going to get a square deal. Now, I've got a plan to make everything right. I want to see you in the place that belongs to you. I want to see you happy, and surrounded by all that is rightfully yours. And if you will join me, we will bring that all about. I told you this once before, you may remember."

He stopped and awaited the effect of his words upon the girl.

"But, Mr. Ames," she replied, her eyes shining with a great hope, "don't think about me! It's the people at Avon that I want to help."

"We'll help them, you and I. We'll make things right all round. And Madam Beaubien shall have no further trouble. Nor shall the Express."

"Oh, Mr. Ames! Do you really mean it? And—Sidney?"

"Sidney shall come home—"

With a rush the impulsive girl, forgetting all but the apparent success of her mission, threw herself upon him and clasped her arms about his neck. "Oh," she cried, "it is love that has done all this! And it has won you!"

The startled man strained the girl tightly in his arms. He could feel the quick throbbing in her throat. Her warm breath played upon his cheek like fitful tropic breezes. For a brief moment the supreme gift of the universe seemed to be laid at his feet. For a fleeting interval the man of dust faded, and a new being, pure and white, seemed to rise within him.

"Yes," he murmured gently, "we'll take him to our home with us."

Slowly, very slowly, the girl released herself from his embrace and stepped back. "With—*us?*" she murmured, searching his face for the meaning which she had dimly discerned in his words.

"Yes—listen!" He reached forward and with a quick movement seized her hand. "Listen, little girl. I want you—I want you! Not now—no, you needn't come to me until you are ready. But say that you will come! Say that! Why, I didn't know until to-day what it was that was making me over! It's you! Don't go! Don't—"

Carmen had struggled away from him, and, with a look of bewilderment upon her face, was moving toward the door. "Oh, I didn't know," she murmured, "that you were—were—proposing *marriage* to me!"

"Don't you understand?" he pursued. "We'll just make all things new! We'll begin all over again, you and I! Why, I'll do anything—anything in the world you say, Carmen, if you will come to me—if you will be my little wife!

"I know—I know," he hastily resumed, as she halted and stood seemingly rooted to the floor, "there is a great difference in our ages. But that is nothing—many happy marriages are made between ages just as far apart as ours. Think—think what it means to you! I'll make you a queen! I'll surround you with limitless wealth! I'll make you leader of society! I'll make Madam Beaubien rich! I'll support the Express, and make it what you want it to be! I'll do whatever you say for the people of Avon! Think, little girl, what depends now upon you!"

Carmen turned and came slowly back to him. "And—you will not do these things—unless I marry you?" she said in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"I will do them all, Carmen, if you will come to me!"

"But—oh, you were only deceiving me all the time! And now—if I refuse—then what?"

"It depends upon you, entirely—and you will come? Not now—but within the next few months—within the year—tell me that you will!"

"But—you will do these things whether I come to you or not?" she persisted.

"I've put it all into your hands," he answered shortly. "I've named the condition."

A strange look crossed the girl's face. She stood as if stunned. Then she glanced about in helpless bewilderment.

"I—I—love—you," she murmured, as she looked off toward the window, but with unseeing eyes. "I would do anything for you that was right. I—love—everybody—everybody; but there are no conditions to *my* love. Oh!" she suddenly cried, burying her face in her hands and bursting into tears. "You have tried to *buy* me!"

Ames rose and came to her. Taking her by the hand he led her, unresisting, back to her chair.

"Listen," he said, bending toward her. "Go home now and think it all over. Then let me know your answer. It was sudden, I admit; I took you by surprise. But—well, you are not going to prevent the accomplishment of all that good, are you? Think! It all depends upon your word!"

The girl raised her tear-stained face. She had been crushed; and another lesson in the cruelty of the human mind—that human mind which has changed not in a thousand years—had been read to her. But again she smiled bravely, as she wiped her eyes.

"It's all right now," she murmured. "It was all right all the time—and I was protected."

Then she turned to him. "Some day," she said gently, and in a voice that trembled just a little, "you will help the people of Avon, but not because I shall marry you. God does not work that way. I have loved you. And I love them. And nothing can kill that love. God will open the way."

"Then you refuse my offer, do you?" he asked sharply, as his face set. "Remember, all the blame will be upon you. I have shown you a way out."

She looked up at him. She saw now with a clairvoyance which separated him from the mask which he had worn. Her glance penetrated until it found his soul.

"You have shown me the depths of the carnal mind," she slowly replied. "The responsibility is not with me, but with—God. I—I came to-day to—to help you. But now I must leave you—with Him."

"Humph!"

He stooped and took up her muff which lay upon the floor. As he did so, a letter fell out. He seized it and glanced at the superscription.

"Cartagena! To José de Rincón! Another little *billet-doux* to your priestly lover, eh?"

She looked down at the letter which he held. "It is money,"

she said, though her thought seemed far away. "Money that I am sending to a little newsboy who bears his name."

"Ha! His brat! But, you still love that fallen priest?"

"Yes," was the whispered answer.

He rose and opened a drawer in his desk. Taking out a paper-bound book, he held it out to the girl. "Look here," he sneered. "Here's a little piece of work which your brilliant lover did some time ago. 'Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest.' Do you know the penalty your clerical paramour paid for that, eh? Then I'll tell you," bending over close to her ear, "his *life!*"

Carmen rose unsteadily. The color had fled from her cheeks. She staggered a few steps toward the door, then stopped. "God—is—is—*everywhere!*" she murmured. It was the refuge of her childhood days.

Then she reeled, and fell heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER 15

IF additional proof of the awful cost of hating one's fellowmen were required, the strike which burst upon the industrial world that winter must furnish it in sickening excess. But other facts, too, were rendered glaringly patent by that same desperate clash which made Avon a shambles and transformed its fair name into a by-word, to be spoken only in hushed whispers when one's thought dwells for a moment upon the madness of the carnal mind that has once tasted blood. The man-cleft chasm between labor and capital, that still unbridged void which separates master and servant, and which a money-drunk class insolently calls God-made, grows wider with each roar of musketry aimed by a frenzied militia at helpless men and women; grows deeper with each splitting crack of the dynamite that is laid to tear asunder the conscienceless wielder of the goad; and must one day fall gaping in a cavernous embouchure that will engulf a nation.

Hitt saw it, and shuddered; Haynerd, too. Ames may have dimly marked the typhoon on the horizon, but, like everything that manifested opposition to this superhuman will, it only set his teeth the firmer and thickened the callous about his cold heart. Carmen saw it, too. And she knew—and the world must some day know—that but one tie has ever been designed adequate to bridge this yawning cañon of human hatred. That tie is love. Aye, well she knew that the world laughed, and called it chimera; called it idealism, and emotional weakness. And

well she knew that the most pitiable weakness the world has ever seen was the class privilege which nailed the bearer of the creed of love upon the cross, and to-day manifests in the frantic grasping of a nation's resources, and the ruthless murder of those who ask that they, too, may have a share in that abundance which is the common birthright of all. Do the political bully, the grafter, the tout, know the meaning of love? No; but they can be taught. Oh, not by the hypocritical millionaire pietists who prate their glib platitudes to their Sunday Bible classes, and return to their luxurious homes to order the slaughter of starving women and babes! They, like their poor victims, are deep under the spell of that mesmerism which tells them that evil is good. Nor by the Church, with its lamentable weakness of knowledge and works. Only by those who have learned something of the Christ-principle, and are striving daily to demonstrate its omnipotence in part, can the world be taught a saving knowledge of the love that solves every problem and creates a new heaven and a newer, better concept of the earth and its fullness.

That morning when Carmen went to see Ames the Express received word of the walk-out of the Avon mill employes. Almost coincident with the arrival of the news, Carmen herself came unsteadily into Hitt's office. The editor glanced up at her, then looked a second time. He had never before seen her face colorless. Finally he laid down his papers.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"Nothing," answered the girl. "What work have you—for me—to-day?" She smiled, though her lips trembled.

"Where have you been?" he pursued, scanning her closely.

She did not reply at once. Then, so low that he scarcely caught the words, "I—I have been with—a friend."

Sidney Ames came puffing into the office at that moment. "Hello!" he cried as he saw Carmen. "How does it happen you're out riding with Willett? Saw him help you out of an auto just now."

"He brought me here," she answered softly.

"Where from?"

"Your father's office."

Hitt and the lad stared at her with open mouths. She turned, and started for her own room, moving as if in a haze. As she neared the door she stumbled. Sidney sprang after her and caught her in his arms. When she turned her face, they saw that her eyes were swimming in tears.

Hitt was on his feet instantly. "Look here!" he cried. "Something's wrong! Leave us, Sidney. Let me talk with her alone."

The boy reluctantly obeyed. Hitt closed the door after him, then took the girl's hand and led her back to his own chair. "Now, little one," he said gently, "tell me all about it."

For a moment she sat quiet. Then the tears began to flow; and then she leaned her head against him and sobbed—sobbed as does the stricken mother who hangs over the lifeless form of her babe—sobbed as does the strong man bereft of the friend of his bosom—sobbed as did the Man of Sorrow, when he held out his arms over the worldly city that cruelly rejected him. He was the channel for the divine; yet the wickedness of the human mind broke his great heart. Carmen was not far from him at that moment.

Hitt held her hand, and choked back the lump that filled his throat. Then the weeping slowly ceased, and the girl looked up into his anxious face.

"It's all past now," she said brokenly. "Jesus forgave them that killed him. And—"

"You have been with—Ames?" said Hitt in a low, quiet tone. "And he tried to kill you?"

"He—he knew not what he was doing. Evil used him, because as yet he has no spiritual understanding. But—God is life! There is—no—death!" Her voice faded away in a whisper.

"Well, little girl, I am waiting for the whole story. What happened?"

Carmen got to her feet. "Nothing happened, Mr. Hitt—nothing. It didn't happen—it wasn't real. I—I seemed to manifest weakness—and I fell—to the floor—but I didn't lose consciousness. And just then Mr. Willett came in—and Mr. Ames sent me here with him."

"But what had Ames said to you, Carmen?" persisted Hitt, his face dark with anger.

The girl smiled feebly. "I see Mr. Ames only as—as God's child," she murmured. "Evil is not real, and it doesn't happen. Now I want to work—work as I never did before! I must! *I must!*"

"Will you not tell me more about it?" he asked, for he knew now that a deadly thrust had been made at the girl's life.

She brushed the tears away from her eyes. "It didn't happen," was her reply. "Good is all that is. God is life. There is *no* death!"

A suspicion flashed into Hitt's mind, kindled by the girl's insistence upon the nothingness of death. "Carmen," he asked, "did he tell you that—some one had died?"

She came to him and laid her head against him. Her hands stole into his. "Don't! Please, Mr. Hitt! We must never

speak of this again! Promise me! I shall overcome it, for God is with me. Promise that no one but us shall know! Make Sidney promise. It—it is—for me."

The man's eyes grew moist, and his throat filled. He drew the girl to him and kissed her forehead. "It shall be as you wish, little one," he said in a choking voice.

"Now set me to work!" she cried wildly. "Anything! This is another opportunity to—to prove God! I must prove Him! I must—right here!"

He turned to his desk with a heavy heart. "There is work to be done now," he said. "I wonder—"

She took the telegram from his hands and scanned it. At once she became calm, her own sorrow swallowed up in selfless love. "Oh, they have gone out at Avon! Those mothers and children—they need me! Mr. Hitt, I must go there at once!"

"I thought so," he replied, swallowing hard. "I knew what you would do. But you are in higher hands than mine, Carmen. Go home now, and get ready. You can go down in the morning. And we, Sidney and I, will say nothing of—of your visit to his father."

* * * * * *

That night Hitt called up the Beaubien and asked if he and Haynerd might come and talk with her after the paper had gone to press, and requesting that she notify Carmen and Father Waite. A few hours later the little group met quietly in the humble cottage. Miss Wall and Sidney were with them. And to them all those first dark hours of morning, when as yet the symbol of God's omnipresence hung far below the horizon, seemed prescient with a knowledge of evil's further claims to the lives and fortunes of men.

"I have asked you here," Hitt gravely announced when they were assembled, "to consider a matter which touches us all—how deeply, God alone knows. At ten o'clock to-night I received this message." He opened the paper which he held in his hand and read:

"'Property of Hitt oil company, including derricks, pump houses, storage tanks, destroyed by fire. Dynamite in pump houses exploded, causing wells to cave and choke. Loss complete. Wire instructions.'"

The news burst over them like the cracking of a bomb. Haynerd, who, like the others, had been kept in ignorance of the message until now, started from his chair with a loud exclamation, then sank back limp. Carmen's face went white. Evil seemed to have chosen that day with canny shrewdness to overwhelm her with its quick sallies from out the darkness of the carnal mind.

Hitt broke the tense silence. "I see in this," he said slowly, "the culmination of a long series of efforts to ruin the Express. That my oil property was deliberately wrecked, I have not the slightest doubt. Nor can I doubt by whose hand."

"Whose?" demanded Haynerd, having again found his voice. "Ames's?"

Hitt replied indirectly. "The Express has stood before the world as a paper unique and apart. And because of its high ideals, the forces of evil singled it out at the beginning for their murderous assaults. That the press of this country is very generally muzzled, stifled, bought and paid for, I have good reason now to know. My constant brushes with the liquor interests, with low politicians, judges, senators, and dive-keepers, have not been revealed even to you. Could you know the pressure which the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, has tried to exert upon us, you would scarce credit me with veracity. But the Express has stood out firm against feudalism, mediaevalism, and entrenched ecclesiasticism. It has fearlessly opposed the legalizing of drugging. It has fought the debauching of a nation's manhood by the legalized sale of a deadly poison, alcohol. And it has fought without quarter the pernicious activity of morally stunted brewers and distillers, whose hellish motto is, 'Make the boys drink!' It has fought the money octopus, and again and again has sounded to the world the peril which money-drunken criminals like Ames and his clique constitute. And for that we must now wear the crown of martyrdom!"

Silence, dismal and empty, lay over the little room for a long time. Then Hitt resumed. "The Express has not been self-supporting. Its growth has been steady, but it has depended for its deficit upon the revenue from my oil property. And so have we all. Ames ruined Madam Beaubien financially, as well as Miss Wall. He cleaned you out, Ned. And now, knowing that we all depended upon my oil wells, he has, I doubt not, completely removed that source of income."

"But," exclaimed Haynerd, "your property was insured, wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied Hitt, with a feeble attempt at a smile. "But with the proviso that dynamite should not be kept on the premises. You will note that dynamite wrecked the wells. That doubtless renders my policies void. But, even in case I should have a fighting chance with the insurance companies, don't you think that they will be advised that I purposely set fire to the wells, in order to collect the insurance? I most certainly do. And I shall find myself with a big lawsuit on my hands, and with no funds to conduct the fight. Ames's work, you know,

is always thorough, and the Express is already facing his suit for libel."

"But you told us you were going to mortgage your property," said Miss Wall.

"I stood ready to, should the Express require it. But, with its recent little boom, our paper did not seem to need that as yet," he returned.

"Good God!" cried Haynerd. "We're done for!"

"Yes, Ned, God *is* good!" It was Carmen who spoke.

Hitt turned quickly to the girl. "Can you say that, after all you have endured, Carmen?"

He looked at her for a moment, lost in wonder. "An outcast babe," he murmured, "left on the banks of a great river far, far away; reared without knowledge of father or mother, and amid perils that hourly threatened to crush her; torn from her beloved ones and thrust out into an unknown and unsympathetic world; used as a stepping-stone to advance the low social ambitions of worldly women; blackened by the foulest slander, and ejected as an outcast by those who had fawned at her feet; still going about with her beautiful message of love, even though knowing that her childhood home is enveloped in the flames of war, and her dear ones scattered, perhaps lost; spurned from the door of the rich man whom she sought to save; carrying with her always the knowledge that the one upon whom her affections had centered had a son in distant Cartagena, and yet herself contributing to the support of the little lad; and now, this morning—" He stopped, for he remembered his promise.

"This morning," she finished, "shielded by the One who is both Father and Mother to me."

"That One surely ought to love you, Carmen—"

"He does," she answered softly.

"Well!" put in Haynerd, torn with anger and fear. "What are we going to do now?"

"Everything, Ned, that error seems to tell us not to do," replied the girl.

She reached over to the little table that stood near, and took from it a Bible. Opening it, she read aloud, very slowly, the entire fourteenth chapter of Exodus. Then she concluded by reading the last two verses of the eighth chapter of Romans.

"Now," she said, looking up, "we know what we are going to do, don't we? We are going right on, as 'seeing Him who is invisible' to men like Mr. Ames."

They sat looking at her in silence.

"There is no curse, whether of the Church, or of business,

or of any department of human thought, that can overthrow legitimate business; and we are in the legitimate business of reflecting God to the world. If the physical sense of supply is now lost, we are fortunate, for now we are obliged to acquire a higher sense. All that we have comes from God. And we become aware of it in our own consciousness. It is there that we interpret His supply. Mr. Ames interprets it one way; we, in a very different way. God has always been able to prepare a table in the wilderness of human thought. If we look for supply from without, we shall not find it, for everything is within. And the very fact that there is a legitimate demand shows that there is the supply to meet it, for—though the world hasn't learned this yet—*it is the supply itself that really creates the demand!*"

"But money makes the wheels go!" retorted Haynerd.

"Money, Ned, is the counterfeit of God. He is our only supply. He is our Principle—infinite, inexhaustible. He is our credit—without limit! We are facing a crisis, but, like every seeming disturbance of the infinite harmony, it will vanish in a little while if we but cling to the divine Mind that is God for guidance."

Hitt folded the telegram and returned it to his pocket. "Are you going to Avon to-morrow?" he abruptly asked of the girl.

"Yes, why not?"

"We can't afford it now!" cried Haynerd.

Hitt reflected a moment. Then he rose. "And we sit here lamenting!" he exclaimed. "And when we have in our midst this girl, who has borne, without one word of complaint or reviling, the world's most poignant sorrows! I—I really regret that I told you of—of this telegram. I seemed for a moment to be overwhelmed. But I am on my feet again now!"

He reached into a pocket and took out some bills, which he handed to Carmen. "That will see you through for a day or so down there. If you need more, wire me. I'll get it from some source! Come," he added, beckoning to Haynerd, "the Express will be issued to-morrow as usual, and we must get to bed. I've really had quite a strenuous day!" He turned, then paused and looked at Carmen.

The girl caught the meaning in his glance, and went directly to the piano. Hitt followed and bent over her.

"Don't," he said, "if you do not feel like it. This day has been a hard one for you, I know. And—"

"But I do feel like it," she answered, smiling up at him. "I want to sing for you. And," her voice dropped low, "I want to sing to—Him."

Hitt gulped down something in his throat. "The bravest

little girl in the whole wide world!" he muttered through his set teeth.

* * * * * *

The carnage at Avon was not incidental; it was the logical effect of definite mental causes. It was the orderly sequence of an endless train of hatred of man for man, bred of greed and the fear of starvation. And starvation is the externalized human belief that life is at the caprice of intelligent matter. But that is an infraction of the first Commandment, given when the human race was a babe.

When the mill hands left their looms at evening of the day following Ames's rejection of their demands, the master closed the doors behind them and locked them out. Were not these mills his?

No, they were a sacred trust asset.

Bah! The parrot-cry of the maudlin sentimental!

But, four thousand men, women, and little children, with never a dollar beyond their earnings of the day, thrust out into the blasts of the bitterest winter the New England states had known in years!

True; but why, then, did they strike? For, you see, that of itself proved the soundness of Ames's single reply to all further appeal: "There is nothing whatever to arbitrate."

In the garden of the human mind waves many a flower, both black and red, fanned by the foul winds of carnal thought. There grow the brothel, the dive, the gin-shop, the jail. About these hardier stems twine the hospital, the cemetery, the madhouse, the morgue. And Satan, "the man-killer from the beginning," waters their roots and makes fallow the soil with the blood of fools. But of those for whom the gardener waits, there is none whose blood is so life-giving to these noxious plants as that type of the materially rich who, like Ames, have waxed gross upon the flesh of their own brothers.

Ames was a gambler in human lives. They were his chips, by which he gained or lost, and of themselves were void of intrinsic value. The world was the table whereon he played; the game *rouge et noir,* with the whirl of predatory commercialism as the wheel, and the ball weighted to drop where he might direct. He carried millions on margin, and with them carried the destinies, for weal or for woe, of millions of his fellow-men, with not one thought that he did so at the cost of their honor and morality, not less than their life-blood.

It had been his custom to close his mills for several months each year, in order to save expense when times were dull. And he did this as casually as he closed the doors of his stables, and with much less thought for the welfare of those concerned. It

is doubtful if he had ever really considered the fact that these four thousand human beings were wholly dependent upon him for their very existence. For he was a business man, and gold was far weightier in the scale of values than human flesh, and much less easily obtained. Cain's comforting philosophy was quite correct, else would the business world not have been so firmly established upon it. Besides, he was terribly busy; and his life was lived upon a plane high, high above that upon which these swarming toilers groveled with their snouts in the dust.

And now, with the doors of his mills barred against the hungry hordes, he would frame the terms upon which they should be reopened. The eight-hour law must not be enforced. Perhaps he could influence the Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional, as depriving the mill hands of the right to labor as long as they pleased. Wages should not be raised. And the right to organize and band together for their common good would be contemptuously denied the ignorant rats who should be permitted to toil for him once more. If they offered violence, there was the state militia, armed and impatient to slay. Also, this was an excellent opportunity to stamp out trade-unionism within the confines of his activities. He would win the plaudits of the whole industrial world by so doing. He therefore immediately got in touch with the Governor, a Tammany puppet, and received that loyal henchman's warm assurances of hearty support for any measures which the great magnate might wish to enforce. He then approached the officers of the state guard, and secured them to a man. Times were hard, and they welcomed his favor. He finally posted armed guards in all his buildings at Avon, and bade them remember that property rights were of divine institution. Then he sat down and dictated the general policy to be followed by the Amalgamated Spinners' Association throughout the country in support of his own selfish ends.

His activity in these preparations, as in everything, was tremendous. His agents swarmed over the state like ants. The Catholic Archbishop was instructed that he must remove Father Danny from Avon, as his influence was pernicious. But the objection was made that the priest was engaged only in humanitarian labors. It availed not; Ames desired the man's removal. And removed he was. The widow Marcus likewise had been doing much talking. Ames's lawyer, Collins, had her haled into court and thoroughly reprimanded. And then, that matters might be precipitated, and Congress duly impressed with the necessity of altering the cotton schedule in favor of the Spinners' Association, Ames ordered his agents to raise the

rents of his miserable Avon tenements. There were few, he knew, who dared even attempt to meet the raise; and those who could not, he ordered set into the streets.

It was a wild winter's day that the magnate chose for the enforcement of this cruel order. A driving blizzard had raged throughout the night, and the snow had banked up in drifts in places many feet deep. The temperature was freezing, and the strong east wind cut like a knife. It was Ames's desire to teach these scum a needed lesson, and he had chosen to enlist the elements to aid him in the righteous task.

For a week, ever since the strike was declared, Carmen had lived among these hectored people. Daily her reports of the unbearable situation had gone to Hitt. And through them the editor had daily striven to awaken a nation's conscience. Ames read the articles, and through the columns of the Budget sought to modify them to the extent of shifting the responsibility to the shoulders of the mill hands themselves, and to a dilatory Congress that was criminally negligent in so framing a cotton tariff as to make such industrial suffering possible. Nor did he omit to foully vilify the Express and calumniate its personnel.

Amid curses, screams, and despairing wails, the satanic work of ejecting the tenement dwellers went on that day. Ames's hirelings, with loaded rifles, assisted the constables and city police in the miserable work, themselves cursing often because of the keen blasts that nipped their ears and numbed their well-cased limbs. More than one tiny, wailing babe was frozen at the breast that dull, drab afternoon, when the sun hung like a ghastly clot of human blood just above the horizon, and its weird, yellow light flitted through the snow-laden streets like gaunt spectres of death. More than one aged, toil-spent laborer, broken at the loom in the service of his insatiable master, fell prone in the drifts and lay there till his thin life-current froze and his tired heart stopped. More than one frenzied, despairing father, forgetful for the moment of the divine right of property, rushed at a guard and madly strove with him, only to be clubbed into complaisance, or, perchance, be left in a welter of crimson on the drifting snow. Carmen saw it all. She had been to see Pillette that same morning, and had been laughed from his presence. She did not understand, she was told, what miserable creatures these were that dared ask for bread and human rights. Wait; they themselves would show their true colors.

And so they did. And the color was red. And it spurted like fountains from their veins. And they saw it with dimming eyes, and were glad, for it brought sweet oblivion. That

night there were great fires built along the frozen creek. Shacks and tents were hastily reared; and the shivering, trembling women and babes given a desperate shelter. Then the men, sullen and grim, drew off into little groups, and into the saloons and gambling halls of the town. And when the blizzard was spent, and the cold stars were dropping their frozen light, these dull-witted things began to move, slowly at first, circling about like a great forming nebula, but gaining momentum and power with each revolution. More than a thousand strong, they circled out into the frozen streets of the little town, and up along the main thoroughfare. Their dull murmurs slowly gained volume. Their low curses welled into a roar. And then, like the sudden bursting of pent-up lava, they swept madly through the town, carrying everything to destruction before them.

Stores, shops, the bank itself, burst open before this wave of maddened humanity. Guns and pistols were thrown from laden shelves to the cursing, sweating mob below. Axes and knives were gathered by armfuls, and borne out into the streets to the whirling mass. Great barrels of liquor were rolled into the gutters and burst asunder. Bread and meat were dragged from the shops and savagely devoured. The police gathered and planted themselves with spitting pistols before the human surge. They went down like grass under stampeded cattle. Frightened clerks and operators rushed to the wires and sent wild, incoherent appeals for help to New York. Pandemonium had the reins, the carnal mind was unleashed.

On rolled the mob, straight on to the massive stone house of Pillette, the resident manager of the great Ames mills. On over the high iron fence, like hungry dock rats. On through the battered gate. On up the broad drive, shouting, shooting, moaning, raving. On over the veranda, and in through broken windows and shattered doors, swarming like flies over reeking carrion, until the flames which burst through the peaked roof of the mansion drove them forth, and made them draw sullenly, protestingly away, leaving the tattered bodies of Pillette and his wife and daughters to be consumed in the roaring furnace.

Oh, ye workers, ye toilers at loom and forge, it is indeed you who bear the world's burdens! It is you who create the rich man's wealth, and fight his battles. So ye fought in the great war between North and South, and protected the rich man at home, hovering in fright over his money bags. It is you who put into his hands the bayonet which he turns against you to guard his wealth and maintain his iniquitous privilege. It is indeed in your hands that the destinies of this great nation

lie; but what will ye do with your marvelous opportunity? What, with your stupendous, untried strength? Will ye once more set up the golden calf, and prostrate yourselves before it? Will ye again enthrone ecclesiastical despotism, and grovel before image of Virgin and Saint? Will ye raise high the powers of mediaeval darkness, and bend your necks anew to the yoke of ignorance and stagnation? But think you now that flames and dynamite will break your present bonds? Aye, America may be made a land without a pauper, without a millionaire, without industrial strife. But fire and sword will not effect the transformation. Yes, perhaps, as has been said, our "comfortable social system and its authority will some day be blown to atoms." But shall we then be better off than we are to-day? For shall we know then how to use our precious liberty?

Blood-drunk and reeling, the mob turned from the flaming wreckage and flowed down toward the mills. There were some among them, saner, and prescient of the dire consequences of their awful work, who counseled restraint. But they were as chips in a torrent. Down into the creek bottom rolled the seething tide, with a momentum that carried it up the far side and crashing into the heavily barred oak doors of the great mills. A crushing hail of bullets fell upon them, and their leaders went down; but the mass wavered not. Those within the buildings knew that they would become carrion in the maws of the ravening wolves outside, and fought with a courage fed with desperation.

In the solemn hush of death Socrates said, "The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways, I to die and you to live. Which is better, God only knows." And mankind through the ages in their last hours have echoed this sentiment of the gentle philosopher. For all human philosophy leads to a single end—resignation.

But hunger transforms resignation into madness. And madness is murder. The frenzied hordes swarming about the Ames mills knew in their heart of hearts that death was preferable to life in death under the goad of human exploitation. But such knowledge came only in rational moments. Now they were crazed and beyond reason.

In the distance, across the swale, the sky glowed red where the souls of the agent of predatory wealth and his family had gone out in withering heat. In the stricken town, men huddled their trembling loved ones about them and stood with loaded muskets. Somewhere on the steel bands that linked this scene of carnage with the great metropolis beyond, a train plunged and roared, leaping over the quivering rails at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, bringing eager militiamen and their

deadly instruments of civilization. For the Ames mills were private property. And that was a divine institution.

* * * * * *

In his luxurious office in the tower of the Ames building the master sat that black night, surrounded by his laboring cohorts. Though they strained under the excitement of the hour, Ames himself remained calm and determined. He was in constant communication with the Governor at Albany, and with the municipal officers of both New York and Avon. He had received the tidings of the destruction of the Pillette family with a grim smile. But the smile had crystallized into an expression of black, malignant hatred when he demanded of the Governor that the New York contingent of the state guard be sent at once to protect his property, and specified that the bullets used should be of the "dum-dum" variety. For they added to the horrors of death. Such bullets had been prohibited by the rules of modern warfare, it was true. But this was a class war. And Ames, foreseeing it all, had purchased a hundred thousand rounds of these hellish things for the militia to exchange for those which the Government furnished. And then, as an additional measure of precaution, he had sent Hood and Collins into the United States District Court and persuaded the sitting judge to issue an injunction, enjoining any possible relief committees from furnishing food and shelter to such as might enter the industrial conflict being waged against him.

Had the man gone mad? That he had! And in the blood-red haze that hung before his glittering eyes was framed the face of the girl who had spurned him but a few days before. She was the embodiment of love that had crossed his path and stirred up the very quintessence of evil within him. From the first she had drawn him. From the first she had aroused within his soul a conflict of emotions such as he had never known before. And from the night when, in the Hawley-Crowles box at the opera he had held her hand and looked down into her fathomless eyes, he had been tortured with the conflicting desires to possess that fair creature, or to utterly destroy her.

But always she had eluded him. Always she hovered just within his grasp; and then drew back as his itching fingers closed. Always she told him she loved him—and he knew she lied not. But such love was not his kind. When he loved, he possessed and used. And such love had its price—but not hers. And so hope strove with wrath, and chagrin with despair. She was a babe! Yet she conquered him. He was omnipotent in this world! Her strength she drew from the world invisible. And with it she had laid the giant low and bound him with chains.

Not so! Though he knew now that she was lost to him forever; though with foul curses he had seen hope flee; yet with it he had also bidden every tender sentiment, every last vestige of good depart from his thought forever more. And:

"—— with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
Evil, be thou my good!"

That same night Hitt's wells burned. And that night the master slept not, but sat alone at his desk in the great Fifth Avenue mansion, and plotted the annihilation of every human being who had dared oppose his worldly ambitions. Plotted, too, the further degradation and final ruin of the girl who had dared to say she loved him, and yet would not become his toy.

* * * * * *

There is no need to curse the iniquitous industrial and social system upon which the unstable fabric of our civilization rests, for that system is its own fell curse in the rotting fruit it bears. A bit of that poisonous fruit had now dropped from the slimy branch at Avon. Up from the yards came the militiamen at double-quick, with rifles unslung and loaded with the satanic Ames bullets. Behind them they dragged two machine guns, capable of discharging three hundred times a minute. The mob had concentrated upon the central building of the mill group, and had just gained entrance through its shattered doors. Before them the guards were falling slowly back, fighting every inch of the way. The dead lay in heaps. The air was thick with powder smoke. One end of the building was in flames. The roar of battle was deafening.

Quickly swinging into action, the militia opened upon the mill hands. Hemmed in between two fires, the mob broke and fled down the frozen stream. The officers of the guard then ordered their men to join in the work of extinguishing the flames, which were beginning to make headway, fanned by the strong draft which swept through the long building. Until dawn they fought the stubborn fire. Then, the building saved, they pitched their tents and sought a brief rest.

At noon the soldiers were again assembled, for there remained the task of arresting the leaders of the mob and bringing them to justice. The town had been placed under martial law with the arrival of the militia. Its streets were patrolled by armed guards, and a strong cordon had been thrown around the shacks which the mill hands had hastily erected the afternoon before. And now, under the protection of a detachment of soldiers, the demand was made for the unconditional surrender of the striking laborers.

Dull terror lay like a pall over the miserable shacks huddled

along the dead stream. It was the dull, hopeless, numbing terror of the victim who awaits the blow from the lion's paw in the arena. Weeping wives and mothers, clasping their little ones to them, knelt upon the frozen ground and crossed themselves. Young men drew their newly-wed mates to their breasts and kissed them with trembling lips. Stern, hard-faced men, with great, knotted hands, grouped together and looked out in deadly hatred at the heartless force surrounding them.

Then out from among them and across the ice went Carmen, up the slippery hillside, and straight to the multi-mouthed machine gun, at the side of which stood Major Camp. She had been all night with these bewildered, maddened people. She had warmed shivering babes at her own breast. She had comforted widows of a night, and newly-bereaved mothers. She had bound up gaping wounds, and had whispered tender words of counsel and advice. And they had clung to her weeping; they had called upon Virgin and Saint to bless her; and they named her the Angel of Avon—and the name would leave her no more.

"Take me," she said, "take me into court, and let me tell all."

The major fell back in amazement. This beautiful, well-clad girl among such miserable vermin!

"You have demanded their leaders," she continued. "I have been trying to lead them. Leave them, and take me."

The major's eyes roved over her face and figure. He could make nothing out of her words, but he motioned to an aid, and bade him place the girl under arrest.

A wild shout then rose from the shacks, as Carmen moved quietly away under guard. It was the last roar of raging despair. The girl was being taken from them! A dozen men sprang out and rushed, muskets in hand, up toward the soldiers to liberate her. The major called to them to halt. Poor, dull-witted creatures! Their narrow vision could comprehend but one thing at a time; and they saw in the arrest of the girl only an additional insult piled upon their already mountainous injuries.

The major shouted a command. A roar burst from the soldiers' rifles. It was answered by a shriek of rage from the hovels, and a murderous return fire. Then the major gave another loud command, and the machine guns began to vomit forth their clattering message of death.

At the sound of shooting, Carmen's guard halted. Then one of them fell, pierced by a bullet from the strikers. The others released the girl, and hurried back to the battle line. Carmen stood alone for a moment. Bullets whizzed close about her.

One sang its death-song almost in her ear. Another tore through her coat. Then she turned and made her way slowly up the hill to the paralyzed town.

Down in the vale beneath, Death swung his scythe with long, sweeping strokes. The two machine guns poured a flaming sheet of lead into the little camp below. The shacks fell like houses of cards. The tents caught fire, and were whirled blazing aloft by the brisk wind. Men dropped like chaff from a mill. Hysterical, screaming women rushed hither and yon to save their young, and were torn to shreds by the merciless fusillade from above. Babes stood for a moment bewildered, and then sank with great, gaping wounds in their little, quivering bodies. And over all brooded the spirit of the great manipulator, Ames, for the protection of whose sacred rights such ghastly work is done among civilized men to-day.

* * * * * *

That night, while the stars above Avon drew a veil of gray between them and the earth below, that they might not see the red embers and stark bodies, Carmen came slowly, and with bent head, into the office of the Express. As she approached Hitt's door she heard him in earnest conversation with Haynerd.

"Yes," the editor was saying, "I had a mortgage placed on the Express to-day, but I couldn't get much. And it's a short-term one, at that. Stolz refused point blank to help us, unless we would let him dictate the policy of the paper. No, he wouldn't buy outright. He's still fighting Ames for control of C. and R. And I learn, too, that the Ketchim case is called for next week. That probably means an attempt by Ames to smoke Stolz out through Ketchim. It also means that Carmen—"

"Yes; what about her?"

"That she will be forced to go upon the stand as a witness."

"Well?"

"And that, as I read it, means a further effort on Ames's part to utterly discredit her in the eyes of the world, and us through her association with the Express."

"But—where is she, Hitt? No word from her since we got the news of the massacre at Avon this afternoon! Nothing happened to her, do you think?"

Hitt's face was serious, and he did not answer. Then Carmen herself came through the open door. Both men rose with exclamations of gladness to welcome her. The girl's eyes were wet, and her wonted smile had gone.

"Mr. Hitt," she said, "I want a thousand dollars to-night."

"Well!" Hitt and Haynerd both sat down hard.

"I must go back to Avon to-morrow," she announced. "And the money is for the—the people down there." Her voice caught, and her words stumbled.

The two men looked at each other blankly. Then Hitt reached out and took her hand. "Tell us," he said, "about the trouble there to-day."

Carmen shook her head. "No," she said, "we will not talk about evil. You—you have the money? A thousand—"

"I have that much on deposit in the bank now, Carmen," he replied gravely. His thought was on the mortgage which he had signed that morning.

"Then write me a check at once, and I will deposit it in the Avon bank when I get there to-morrow. I must go home now —to see mother."

"But—let me think about it, Carmen. Money is—well, won't less than that amount do you?"

"No, Mr. Hitt. Write the check now."

Hitt sighed, but made no further protest. If the Express must founder, then this money were well spent on the stricken people of Avon. He took out his book, and immediately wrote the check and handed it to the girl.

"Hitt," said Haynerd, after Carmen had left them and he had exhausted his protests over the size of the check, "something's killing that girl! And it isn't only the trouble at Avon, either! What is it? I believe you know."

Hitt shook his head. "She's no longer in this world, Ned. She left it two days ago."

"Eh? Say! News about that Rincón fellow?"

But Hitt would say nothing to further illuminate his cryptic remark, and Haynerd soon switched to the grim topic of the industrial war in progress at Avon.

"What are we coming to?" he cried. "What's going to be the end? A social and industrial system such as ours, which leaves the masses to starve and consume with disease under intolerable burdens, that a handful may rot in idleness and luxury, marks us in this latest century as hopelessly insane!"

"Well, Ned, whence came the idea, think you, that it is divine justice for a majority of the people on earth to be poor in order that a few may be rich? And how are we going to get that perverted idea out of the minds of men? Will legislation do it?"

"Humph!" grunted Haynerd. "Legislation arouses no faith in me! We are suffering here because, in our immensely selfish thought of ourselves only, we have permitted the growth of such men as Ames, and allowed them to monopolize the country's resources. Heavens! Future generations will laugh them-

selves sick over us! Why, what sane excuse is there for permitting the commonest necessities of life to be juggled with by gamblers and unmoral men of wealth? How can we ask to be considered rational when we, with open eyes, allow 'corners' on foodstuffs, and permit 'wheat kings' to amass millions by corralling the supply of grain and then raising the price to the point where the poor washerwoman starves? Lord! We are a nation gone mad! The existence of poverty in a country like America is not only proof positive that our social system is rotten to the core, but that our religion is equally so! As a people we deserve to be incarcerated in asylums!"

"A considerable peroration, Ned," smiled Hitt. "And yet, one that I can not refute. The only hope I see is in a radical change in the mental attitude of the so-called enlightened class —and yet they are the very worst offenders!"

"Sure! Doesn't the militia exist for men like Ames? To-day's work at Avon proves it, I think!"

"Apparently so, Ned," returned Hitt sadly. "And the only possibility of a change in enlightened people is through a better understanding of what is really good and worth while. That means real, practical Christianity. And of that Ames knows nothing."

"Seems to me, Hitt, that it ought to stagger our preachers to realize that nineteen centuries of their brand of Christianity have scarcely even begun to cleanse society. What do you suppose Borwell thinks, anyway?"

"Ned, they still cling to human law as necessarily a compelling influence in the shaping of mankind's moral nature."

"And go right on accepting the blood-stained money of criminal business men who have had the misfortune to amass a million dollars! And, more, they actually hold such men up as patterns for the youth to emulate! As if the chief end of endeavor were to achieve the glorious manhood of an Ames! And he a man who is deader than the corpses he made at Avon to-day!"

"The world's ideal, my friend, has long been the man who succeeds in everything except that which is worth while," replied Hitt. "But we have been bidden to come out from the world, and be separate. Is it not so?"

"Y—e—s, of course. But I can't take my thought from Avon—"

"And thereby you emphasize your belief in the reality of evil."

"Well—look at us! The Express stands for righteousness. And now we are a dead duck!"

"Then, if that is so, why not resign your position, Ned? Go, seek work elsewhere."

"No, sir! Not while the Express has a leg to stand on! Your words are an offense to me, sir!"

Hitt rose and clapped his friend heartily on the back. "Ned, old man! You're a jewel! Things do look very dark for us, if we look only with the human sense of vision. But we are trying to look at the invisible things within. And there is only perfection there. Come, we must get to work. The Express still lives."

"But—Carmen?"

Hitt turned and faced him. "Ned, Carmen is not in our hands. She is now completely with her God. We must henceforth wait on Him."

* * * * * *

On the following afternoon at three a little group of Avon mill hands crept past the guards and met in Father Danny's Mission, down in the segregated vice district. They met there because they dared not go through the town to the Hall. Father Danny was with them. He had slipped into town the preceding night, and remained in hiding through the day. And Carmen was with them, too. She had gone first to the Hall, and then to the Mission, when she arrived again in the little town. And after she had deposited Hitt's check in the bank she had asked Father Danny to call together some of the older and more intelligent of the mill hands, to discuss methods of disbursing the money.

Almost coincident with her arrival had come an order from Ames to apprehend the girl as a disturber of the peace. The hush of death lay over Avon, and even the soldiers now stood aghast at their own bloody work of the day before. Carmen had avoided the main thoroughfares, and had made her way unrecognized. At a distance she saw the town jail, heavily guarded. Its capacity had been sorely taxed, and many of the prisoners had been crowded into cold, cheerless store rooms, and placed under guards who stood ready to mow them down at the slightest threatening gesture.

"It's come, Miss Carmen!" whispered Father Danny, after he had quietly greeted the girl. "It's come! It may be the beginning of the great revolution we've all known wasn't far off! I just *had* to get back here! They can only arrest me, anyway. And, oh, God! my poor, poor people!"

He sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. But soon he sprang to his feet. "No time for mollycoddling!" he exclaimed. "Come, men, we'll give you checks, and do you get food for the babies. Only, don't buy of the company stores!"

"We'll have to, Father," said one of them. "It's dangerous not to."

"But they've never taken cash from you there, ye know. Only your pay scrip."

"Aye, Father, and they've discounted that ten per cent each time. But if we bought at other stores we were discharged. And now we'd be blacklisted."

"Ah, God, that's true!" exclaimed the priest. "But now then, Miss Carmen, we'll begin."

For an hour the girl wrote small checks, and the priest handed them out to the eager laborers. They worked feverishly, for they knew that at any moment they might be apprehended.

"Ah, you men!" cried Father Danny, at last unable to restrain himself. "Did ye but know that this grand nation is wholly dependent on such as you, its common people! Not on the rich, I say, the handful that own its mills and mines, but on you who work them for your rich masters! But then, ye're so ignorant!"

"Don't, Father!" pleaded Carmen, "don't! They have suffered so much!"

"Ah, lass, it's but love that I'm dealin' out to 'em, God knows! And yet, it's they that are masters of the situation, only they don't know it! There's the pity! They've no leaders, except such as waste their money and leave 'em in the ditch! The world's social schemes, Miss Carmen, don't reach such as these. They're only sops. And they've got the contempt of the wage-earners."

"The Church, Father, could do much for these people, if—"

"Don't hesitate, Miss Carmen. You mean, if we didn't give all our thought to the rich, eh? But still, it's wholly up to the people themselves, after all. And, mark me, when they do rise, why, such men as Ames won't know what's hit 'em!"

The door was thrown violently open at that moment, and a squad of soldiers under the command of a lieutenant entered.

Carmen and Father Danny rose and faced them. The mill hands stood like stone images, their faces black with suppressed rage. The lieutenant halted his men, and then advanced to the girl.

"Is a woman named Carmen Ariza here?" he demanded rudely.

"I am she," replied the fearless girl.

"Come with us," he said in a rough voice.

"That she will not!" cried Father Danny, suddenly pulling the girl back and thrusting himself before her.

The lieutenant raised his hand. The soldiers advanced. The mill hands quickly formed about the girl. And then, with a yell of rage, they threw themselves upon the soldiers.

For a few minutes the little room was a bedlam. The crazed strikers fought without weapons, except such as they could wrest from the soldiers. But they fought to the death. One of them seized Carmen and threw her beneath the table at which she had been working. Above her raged the desperate conflict. The shouting and cursing might have been heard for blocks around. Father Danny stood in front of the table, beneath which lay the girl. He strove desperately to maintain his position, that he might protect her, meantime frantically calling to the mill hands to drag her out to the rear, and escape by the back door.

In the midst of the *mêlée* a soldier mounted a chair near the door and raised his rifle. The shot roared out, and Father Danny pitched forward to the floor. Another shot, and still another followed in quick succession. The strikers fell back. Confusion seized them. Then they turned and fled precipitately through the rear exit.

The lieutenant dragged Carmen from beneath the table and out through the door. Then, assembling his men, he gave an order, and they marched away with her up the icy street to the town jail.

CHAPTER 16

WITH the wreckage which he had wrought strewn about him, J. Wilton Ames sat at his rich desk far above the scampering human ants in the streets below and contemplated the fell work of his own hands. And often and anon as he looked, great beads of perspiration welled out upon his forehead, and his breath came hot and dry. In the waste basket at his feet lay crumpled the newspapers with their shrieking, red-lettered versions of the slaughter at Avon. He was not a coward, this man! But he had pushed that basket around the desk out of his sight, for when he looked at it something rose before him that sent a chill to his very soul. At times his vision blurred; and then he passed his hands heavily across his eyes. He had chanced to read in the grewsome accounts of the Avon massacre that little children had been found among those fallen shacks, writhing in their last agonies. And the reports had said that great, red-dripping holes had been ripped in their thin little bodies by those awful "dum-dum" bullets. God! Why had he used them? And why had the demoniac soldiers down there blown the brains from harmless women and helpless babes? He really had not intended to go so far!

And yet, he had! Curse them! The brats would have grown up to oppose the vested privileges of the rich! They, too, would have become anarchists and rioters, bent on leveling the huge industrial fabric which such as he had so laboriously erected under the legal protection afforded their sacred rights! He had done well to remove them now! And the great captains of industry would thank him for the example he had thus fearlessly set!

To think of Avon was for him now to think in terms of blood. And yet his carnal soul hourly wrestled sore with thoughts of a wholly different stamp; with those strange emotions which he had felt when in Carmen's presence; with those unfamiliar sentiments which, had he not fought them back so bitterly, might have made him anew, and—

But the remembrance maddened him. His face grew black, and his mouth poured forth a torrent of foul imprecations and threats upon her and upon those who stood with her. His rage towered again. He smote the desk with his great fist. He fumed, he frothed, he hurled reason from its throne, and bade the Furies again become his counselors.

Upon the desk before him lay the mortgage papers which Hitt had signed. He had bought the mortgage from the bank which had loaned the Express the money. He would crush that sheet now, crush it until the ink dripped black from its emasculated pages! And when it fell into his hands, he would turn it into the yellowest of sensational journals, and hoot the memory of its present staff from ocean to ocean!

Then, his head sunk upon his breast, he fell to wondering if he might not secure a mortgage upon the Beaubien cottage, and turn its occupants into the street. Ah, what a power was money! It was the lever by which he moved the world, and clubbed its dull-witted inhabitants into servile obeisance! Who could stand against him—

That girl!

He sprang to his feet and called Hood. That obedient lackey hastened into his master's presence.

"The Ketchim trial?" snarled Ames.

"Called for this week, sir," replied Hood, glad that the announcement could not possibly offend his superior.

"Humph! The—that girl?"

"Brought up from Avon, and lodged in the Tombs, sir."

"You tell Judge Spencer that if he allows her bail I'll see that his federal appointment is killed, understand?"

"You may rely upon him, sir."

Ames regarded the man with a mixture of admiration and utter contempt. For Hood stood before him a resplendent ex-

ample of the influence of the most subtle of all poisons, the insidious lure of money. Soul and body he had prostituted himself and his undoubted talents to it. And now, were he to be turned adrift by Ames, the man must inevitably sink into oblivion, squeezed dry of every element of genuine manhood, and weighted with the unclean lucre for which his bony fingers had always itched.

"Will Cass defend Ketchim?" the master asked.

"Oh, doubtless. He knows most about the formation of the defunct Simití company."

"Well, see him and—you say he's young, and got a wife and baby? Offer him twenty-five thousand to quit the case."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't do, sir," returned Hood, shaking his head dubiously. "I've had men talking with him regarding the trial, and he—"

"Then get him over here. I'll see if I can't persuade him," growled Ames in an ugly tone.

Hood bowed and went out. A few minutes later Reverend Darius Borwell was ushered into the financier's private office.

"Mr. Ames," cried that gentleman of the cloth, "it's shocking, terribly so, what those unbridled, unprincipled mill hands have drawn upon themselves down in Avon! Goodness! And four members of the Church of the Social Revolution came to my study last evening and demanded that I let them speak to my congregation on the coming Sabbath!"

"Well?"

"Why, I told them certainly not! My church is God's house! And I shall have policemen stationed at the doors next Sunday to maintain order! To think that it has come to this in America! But, Mr. Ames, is your house guarded? I would advise—"

"Nobody can get within a block of my house, sir, without ringing a series of electric bells," replied Ames evenly. "I have fifty guards and private detectives in attendance in and about my premises all the time. My limousine has been lined with sheet steel. And my every step is protected. I am not afraid for my life. I simply want to keep going until I can carry out a few plans I have in hand." His thought had reverted again to the fair girl in the Tombs.

"But now, Borwell," he continued, "I want to talk with you about another matter. I am drawing up my will, and—"

"Why, my dear Mr. Ames! You are not ill?"

Ames thought of his physician's constantly iterated warning; but shook his head. "I may get caught in this Avon affair," he said evasively. "And I want to be prepared. The

President has sent his message to Congress, as you may be aware. There are unpleasant suggestions in it regarding dispossession in cases like my own. I'm coming back by magnanimously willing to Congress a hundred millions, to stand as a fund for social uplift."

"Ah!" sighed the clergyman. Great was Mammon!

"But the little matter I wish to discuss with you is the sum that I am setting aside for the erection of a new church edifice," continued Ames, eying the minister narrowly.

"You don't mean it!" cried that worthy gentleman, springing up and clasping the financier's hand. "Mr. Ames! So magnanimous! Ah—the amount?"

"Well, will half a million do?" suggested Ames.

The minister reflected a moment. One should not be too precipitate in accepting tentative benefactions. "Ah—we really should have—ah—a trifle more, Mr. Ames. There's the settlement home, and the commons, you know, and—"

"Humph! Well, we'll start with half a million," replied Ames dryly. "By the way, you know Jurges, eh? Reverend William Jurges? Er—have you any particular influence with him, if I may ask?" His sharp eyes bored straight through the wondering divine.

"Why—yes—yes, I know the gentleman. And, as for influence—well, I may—"

"Yes, just so," put in Ames. "Now there is a trial coming up this week, and Jurges will be called to the stand. I want you to give him the true facts in regard to it. I'll call Hood, and we'll go over them in detail now. Then you see Jurges this afternoon, and—say, he's raising a building fund too, isn't he?"

The magnate summoned Hood again; and for an hour the trio discussed the forthcoming trial of the unfortunate Philip O. Ketchim. Then Ames dismissed the clergyman, and bade his office boy admit the young lawyer, Cass, who had come in response to Hood's request.

For some moments after Cass entered the office Ames stood regarding him, studying what manner of man he was, and how best to approach him. Then he opened the conversation by a casual reference to the unsatisfactory business situation which obtained throughout the country, and expressed wonder that young men just starting in their professions managed to make ends meet.

"But," he concluded with deep significance, "better go hungry than take on any class of business which, though promising good money returns, nevertheless might eventually prove suicidal." He looked hard at the young lawyer when he paused.

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Ames," returned Cass. "But as I am particularly busy this morning, may I ask why you have sent for me? Have you anything that I can—"

"I have," abruptly interrupted the financier. "We need additions to our legal staff. I thought perhaps you might like to talk over the matter with me, with a view to entering our employ."

"Why, Mr. Ames, I—I have never thought of—" The young man's eyes glistened.

"Well, suppose you think of it now," said Ames, smiling graciously. "I have heard considerable about you of late, and I must say I rather like the way you have been handling your work."

Cass looked at him with rising wonder. The work which he had been doing of late was most ordinary and routine, and called for no display of legal skill whatever. Suspicions slowly began to rise.

"I'd hate to see you tackle anything at this stage of your career, Mr. Cass, that would bring discredit upon you. And I am afraid your association with Ketchim is going to do just that. But possibly you do not intend to handle further business for him?"

Ketchim, though long confined in the Tombs, had at length secured bail, through the not wholly disinterested efforts of his uncle, Stolz, the sworn enemy of Ames. And, because of his loyal efforts in behalf of Ketchim, Stolz had insisted that Cass be retained as counsel for the latter when his trial should come up.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Cass," said Ames suddenly. "Mr. Hood will take you on at a salary of, say, five thousand to start with. We'll try you out for a few weeks. Then, if we don't mutually fit, why, we'll quietly separate and say nothing. How about it?"

Cass thought hard. Half of that salary would have looked large to him then. But—

"May I ask," he slowly said in reply, "what class of work Mr. Hood would give me to start with?"

"Why, nothing of great importance, perhaps, while you are getting into the harness. Possibly court work, as a starter. You've had experience in that, eh?"

Cass reflected again. The temptation was tremendous. That little house which he had passed and stopped to look at so wistfully every night on his way home was now within his grasp.

He glanced up at the great man, sitting so calmly before him. Then he thought suddenly of Avon. Then of Carmen.

"Mr. Ames," he said, "if I enter your employ, it must be with the stipulation that I shall have nothing to do with the Ketchim trial."

Ames's face went suddenly dark. "If you enter my employ, sir, it will be with the stipulation that you do as I say," he returned coldly.

And then the young lawyer saw through the mask. And his anger flamed high at what he discerned behind it. He rose and faced the great man.

"Mr. Ames," said he, "you have made a mistake. I am poor, and I need business. But I have not as yet fallen so completely under the spell of fortune-hunting as to sell my honor to a man like you! To enter your employ, I now see, would mean the total loss of character and self respect. It would mean a lowering of my ideals, whatever they may be, to your own vulgar standard. I may have done wrong in becoming associated with Mr. Ketchim. In fact, I know that I have. But I pledged myself to assist him. And yet, in doing so, I scarcely can blacken my reputation to the extent that I should were I to become your legal henchman. I want wealth. But there are some terms upon which even I can not accept it. And your terms are among them. I bid you good morning."

Ames gave a snort of anger when Cass went out. Summoning Hood, he vented his great wrath upon that individual's bald pate. "And now," he concluded, "I want that fellow Cass so wound up that he will sneak off to a lonely spot and commit suicide! And if you can't do it, then I'll accept your resignation!"

"Very well, sir," replied Hood. "And, by the way, Mr. Ames, I have just learned that Judge Harris, father of the young man who came up with that girl, is in Colombia. Seems that he's taken some wealthy man down there to look at La Libertad mine."

"What!" Ames's eyes snapped fire.

"They believe you put one over on Ketchim, with the help of Monsignor Lafelle, and so they've gone down to get titles to that mine."

"By G—"

"And they say that—"

"Never mind what they say!" roared Ames. "Cable Wenceslas at once to see that those fellows remain permanently in Colombia. He has ways of accomplishing that. Humph! Fools! Judge Harris, eh? Ninny! I guess Wenceslas can block his little game!"

His great frame shook slightly as he stood consuming with rage, and a slight hemorrhage started from his nostrils. He

turned to the lavatory. And as he walked, Hood thought his left foot dragged slightly. But the lawyer made no comment.

* * * * * *

And then, with the way well cleared, came the Ketchim trial, which has gone down in history as containing the most spectacular *dénoûment* in the record of legal procedure in the New World. Had it been concerned, as was anticipated, only with routine legal procedure against the man Ketchim, a weak-souled compound of feeble sycophancy and low morals, it would have attracted slight attention, and would have been spread upon the court records by uninterested clerks with never a second thought. But there were elements entering into it of whose existence the outside world could not have even dreamed. Into it converged threads which now may be traced back to scenes and events in three continents; threads whose intricate windings led through trackless forest and dim-lit church; through court of fashion and hut of poverty; back through the dark mazes of mortal thought, where no light shines upon the carnal aims and aspirations of the human mind; back even to the doors of a palace itself, even to the proudest throne of the Old World.

But none of these elements found expression in the indictment against the frightened defendant, the small-visioned man who had sought to imitate the mighty Ames, and yet who lacked sufficient intelligence of that sort which manifests in such a perversion of skill and power. Ames was a tremendous corruptionist, who stood beyond the laws simply because of the elemental fact that he himself made those laws. Ketchim was a plain deceiver. And his deception was religious fervor. Mingling his theology with fraud, he employed the unholy alliance for the purpose of exploiting the credulous who attended his prayer meetings and commented with bated breath upon his beautiful showing of religious zeal. He was but one of a multitude afflicted with the "dollar mania." His misfortune was that his methods were so antique that they could not long fail of detection. And it was because of his use of the mails for the purpose of deceit that the indictment had been drawn against Philip O. Ketchim *et al.* by the long-suffering, tolerant complainant, called the people.

Nominally the people's interests were in the hands of the Public Prosecutor, a certain smug young worldling named Ellis. But, as that gentleman owed his appointment to Ames, it is not surprising that at his right hand sat Hood and his well trained staff. Nominally, too, Judge Spencer conducted the trial strictly upon its merits, not all of which lay with the people. But the judge might have been still prosecuting petty cases

back in the unknown little district from which he came, had it not been for the great influence of Ames, long since, who had found him on a certain occasion useful. And so the jury panel contained none but those who, we may be very sure, were amenable to the tender pressure of a soft hand lined with yellow gold. And only those points of evidence were sustained which conduced to the incrimination of the miserable defendant. Ketchim was doomed before the trial began.

And yet, to subserve the dark schemes of Ames, and to lengthen the period of torture to which his victims should be subjected, the trial was dragged through many days. Besides, even he and his hirelings were bound to observe the formalities.

It was at the suggestion of Cass that no effort had been made to procure bail for Carmen after her arrest. The dramatic may always be relied upon to carry a point which even plain evidence negatives. And she, acquiescing in the suggestion, remained a full two weeks in the Tombs before Ames's eager counsel found their opportunity to confront her on the witness stand and besmirch her with their black charges. The Beaubien was prostrated. But, knowing that for her another hour of humiliation and sorrow had come, she strove mightily to summon her strength for its advent. Father Waite toiled with Cass day and night. Hitt and Haynerd, without financial resources, pursued their way, grim and silent. The Express was sinking beneath its mountainous load. And they stood at the helm, stanch to their principles, not yielding an iota to offers of assistance in exchange for a reversal of the policy upon which the paper had been launched.

"We're going down, Hitt," said Haynerd grimly. "But we go with the flag flying at the mast!"

Yet Hitt answered not. He was learning to know as did Carmen, and to see with eyes which were invisible.

It was just when the jury had been impaneled, after long days of petty wrangling and childish recrimination among the opposing lawyers, that Stolz came to Ames and laid down his sword. The control of C. and R. should pass unequivocally to the latter if he would but save Ketchim from prison.

Then Ames lay back and roared with laughter over his great triumph. C. and R! Poof! He would send Stolz' nephew to prison, and then roll a bomb along Wall Street whose detonation would startle the financial world clean out of its orbit! Stolz had failed to notice that Ames's schemes had so signally worked out that C. and R. was practically in his hands now! The defeated railroad magnate at length backed out of the Ames office purple with rage. And then he pledged himself to hypothecate his entire fortune to the rescue of his worthless nephew.

Thus, in deep iniquity, was launched the famous trial, a process of justice in name only, serving as an outlet for a single man's long nurtured personal animosities. The adulterous union of religion and business was only nominally before the bar. The victims, not the defendant only, not the preachers, the washerwomen, the factory girls, the widows, and the orphans, whose life savings Ketchim had drawn into his net by the lure of pious benedictions, but rather those unfortunates who had chanced to incur the malicious hatred of the great, legalized malefactor, Ames, by opposition to his selfish caprice, and whose utter defeat and discrediting before the public would now place the crown of righteous expediency upon his own chicanery and extortion and his wantonly murderous deeds.

The prosecution scored from the beginning. Doctor Jurges, utterly confused by the keen lawyers, and vainly endeavoring to follow the dictates of his conscience, while attempting to reconcile them with his many talks with Darius Borwell, gave testimony which fell little short of incriminating himself. For there were produced letters which he had written to members of his congregation, and which for subtlety and deception, though doubtless innocently done, would have made a seasoned promoter look sharp to his own laurels.

Then Harris was called. He had been summoned from Denver for the trial. But his stuttering evidence gave no advantage to either side. And then—crowning blunder!—Cass permitted Ketchim himself to take the stand. And the frightened, trembling broker gave his own cause such a blow that the prosecution might well have asked the judge to take the case from the jury then and there. It was a legal *faux pas;* and Cass walked the floor and moaned the whole night through.

Then, as per program, the prosecution called Madam Beaubien. Could not that sorrowing woman have given testimony which would have aided the tottering defense, and unmasked the evil genius which presided over this mock trial? Ah, yes, in abundance! But not one point would the judge sustain when it bordered upon forbidden territory. It was made plain to her that she was there to testify against Ketchim, and to permit the Ames lawyers to bandy her own name about the court room upon the sharp points of their cruel cross-questions and low insinuations.

But, she protested, her knowledge of the Simití company's affairs had come through another person.

And who might that be?

Mr. J. Wilton Ames.

Ah! But Mr. Ames should give his own testimony—for was it not he who had, not long since, legally punished the

witness on a charge of defamation of character? The witness was dismissed. And the spectators knew that it was because the righteous prosecution could no longer stain its hands with one who bore such a tarnished name as she.

And then, taunted and goaded to exasperation, the wronged woman burst into tears and flayed the bigamist Ames there before the court room crowded with eager society ladies and curious, non-toiling men. Flayed him as men are seldom flayed and excoriated by the women they trample. The bailiffs seized her, and dragged her into an ante-room; the judge broke his gavel rapping for order, and threatened to clear the court; and then Cass, too young and inexperienced to avoid battle with seasoned warriors, rose and demanded that Madam Beaubien be returned to the stand.

The astonished judge hesitated. Cass stood his ground. He turned to the people, as if seeking their support. A great murmur arose through the court room. The judge looked down at Ames. That man, sitting calm and unimpassioned, nodded his head slightly. And the woman was led back to the chair.

"It may have an important bearing upon the case, Your Honor!" cried the young lawyer for the defense. "Mr. Ames is to take the stand as an important witness in this case. If Madam Beaubien brings such a charge against him, it gives us reason to believe his honor peccable, and his testimony open to suspicion!"

It was a daring statement, and the whole room gasped, and held its breath.

"I object, Your Honor!" shouted the chief prosecutor, Ellis. "The lawyer for the defense is in contempt of court! Madam Beaubien has been shown to be a—"

"The objection is sustained!" called the judge. "The charge is utterly irrelevant! Order in the court!"

"His first wife's portrait—is in a glass window—in his yacht!" cried the hysterical Beaubien. Then she crumpled up in a limp mass, and was led from the chair half fainting.

At the woman's shrill words a white-haired man, dressed in black, clerical garb, who had been sitting in the rear of the room close to the door, rose hastily, then slowly sat down again. At his feet reposed a satchel, bearing several foreign labels. Evidently he had but just arrived from distant lands.

Consternation reigned throughout the room for a few minutes. Then Cass, believing that the psychological moment had arrived, loudly called Carmen Ariza to the stand. The dramatic play must be continued, now that it had begun. The battle which had raged back and forth for long, weary days, could be won, if at all, only by playing upon the emotions of the jury,

for the evidence thus far given had resulted in showing not only the defense, but likewise the Beaubien, and all who had been associated with the Simití company, including Cass himself, to be participators in gross, intentional fraud.

The remaining witness, the girl herself, had been purposely neglected by the prosecution, for the great Ames had planned that she must be called by the defense. Then would he bring up the prostitute, Jude, and from her wring testimony which must blast forever the girl's already soiled name. Following her, he would himself take the stand, and tell of the girl's visits to his office; of her protestations of love for him; of her embracing him; and of a thousand indiscretions which he had carefully garnered and stored for this triumphant occasion.

But the judge, visibly perturbed by the dramatic turn which the case seemed to be taking, studied his watch for a moment, then Ames's face, and then abruptly adjourned court until the following day. Yet not until Cass had been recognized, and the hounded girl summoned from her cell in the Tombs, to take the stand in the morning for—her life!

CHAPTER 17

IN the days to come, when the divine leaven which is in the world to-day shall have brought more of the carnal mind's iniquity to the surface, that the Sun of Truth may destroy the foul germs, there shall be old men and women, and they which, looking up from their work, peep and mutter of strange things long gone, who shall fall wonderingly silent when they have told again of the fair young girl who walked alone into the crowded court room that cold winter's morning. And their stories will vary with the telling, for no two might agree what manner of being it was that came into their midst that day.

Even the bailiffs, as if moved by some strange prescience, had fallen back and allowed her to enter alone. The buzz of subdued chatter ceased, and a great silence came over all as they looked. Some swore, in awed whispers, when the dramatic day had ended, and judge and jury and wrangling lawyer had silently, and with bowed heads, gone quiet and thoughtful each to his home, that a nimbus encircled her beautiful head when she came through the door and faced the gaping multitude. Some said that her eyes were raised; that she saw not earthly things; and that a heavenly presence moved beside her. Nor may we lightly set aside these tales; for, after the curtain had fallen upon the wonderful scene about to be enacted, there was

not one present who would deny that, as the girl came into the great room and went directly to the witness chair, God himself walked at her side and held her hand.

"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Through the mind of that same white-haired man in the clerical garb ran these words as he watched the girl move silently across the room. She seemed to have taken on a new meaning to him since the previous day. And as he looked, his eyes grew moist, and he drew out his handkerchief.

But his were not the only eyes that had filled then. Hitt and Haynerd bent their heads, that the people might not see; Miss Wall and the Beaubien wept silently, and with no attempt to stay their grief; Jude buried her head in her hands, and rocked back and forth, moaning softly. Why they wept, they knew not. A welter of conflicting emotions surged through their harassed souls. They seemed to have come now to the great crisis. And which way the tide would turn rested with this lone girl.

For some moments after she was seated the silence rêmained unbroken. And as she sat there, waiting, she looked down at the man who sought to destroy what he might not possess. Some said afterward that as she looked at him she smiled. Who knows but that the Christ himself smiled down from the cross at those who had riven his great heart?

But Ames did not meet her glance. Somehow he dared not. He was far from well that morning, and an ugly, murderous mood possessed him. And yet, judged by the world's standards, he had tipped the crest of success. He had conquered all. Men came and went at his slightest nod. His coffers lay bursting with their heavy treasure. He was swollen with wealth, with material power, with abnormal pride. His tender sensibilities and sympathies were happily completely ossified, and he was stone deaf and blind to the agonies of a suffering world. Not a single aim but had been realized; not a lone ambition but had been met. Even the armed camp at Avon, and the little wooden crosses over the fresh mounds there, all testified to his omnipotence; and in them, despite their horrors, he felt a satisfying sense of his own great might.

The clerk held up the Bible for the girl to give her oath. She looked at him for a moment, and then smiled. "I will tell the truth," she said simply.

The officer hesitated, and looked up at the judge. But the latter sat with his eyes fixed upon the girl. The clerk did not press the point; and Carmen was delivered into the hands of the lawyers.

Cass hesitated. He knew not how to begin. Then, yielding to a sudden impulse, he asked the girl to mention briefly the place of her birth, her parentage, and other statistical data, leading up to her association with the defendant.

The story that followed was simply given. It was but the one she had told again and again. Yet the room hung on her every word. And when she had concluded, Cass turned her back again to Simití, and to Rosendo's share in the mining project which had ultimated in this suit.

A far-away look came into the girl's eyes as she spoke of that great, black man who had taken her from desolate Badillo into his own warm heart. There were few dry eyes among the spectators when she told of his selfless love. And when she drew the portrait of him, standing alone in the cold mountain water, far up in the jungle of Guamocó, bending over the laden *batea*, and toiling day by day in those ghastly solitudes, that she might be protected and educated and raised above her primitive environment in Simití, there were sobs heard throughout the room; and even the judge, hardened though he was by conflict with the human mind, removed his glasses and loudly cleared his throat as he wiped them.

Ames first grew weary as he listened, and then exasperated. His lawyer at length rose to object to the recital on the ground that it was largely irrelevant to the case. And the judge, pulling himself together, sustained the objection. Cass sat down. Then the prosecution eagerly took up the cross-examination. Ames's hour had come.

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," murmured the white-haired man in the clerical garb far back in the crowded room. Had he learned the law of Truth to error, "Thou shalt surely die"? Did he discern the vultures gnawing at the rich man's vitals? Did he, too, know that this giant of privilege, so insolently flaunting his fleeting power, his blood-stained wealth and his mortal pride, might as well seek to dim the sun in heaven as to escape the working of those infinite divine laws which shall effect the destruction of evil and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven even here upon earth?

Ames leaned over to whisper to Hood. The latter drew Ellis down and transmitted his master's instructions. The atmosphere grew tense, and the hush of expectancy lay over all.

"Miss Carmen," began Ellis easily, "your parentage has been a matter of some dispute, if I mistake not, and—"

Cass was on his feet to object. What had this question to do with the issue?

But the judge overruled the objection. That was what he was there for. Cass should have divined it by this time.

"H'm!" Ellis cleared his throat and adjusted his glasses. "And your father, it is said, was a negro priest. I believe that has been accepted for some time. A certain Diego, if I recall correctly."

"I never knew my earthly father," replied Carmen in a low voice.

"But you have admitted that it might have been this Diego, have you not?"

"It might have been," returned the girl, looking off absently toward the high windows.

"Did he not claim you as his daughter?" pursued the lawyer.

"Yes," softly.

"Now," continued Ellis, "that being reasonably settled, is it not also true that you used the claim of possessing this mine, La Libertad, as a pretext for admission to society here in New York?"

The girl did not answer, but only smiled pityingly at him. He, too, had bartered his soul; and in her heart there rose a great sympathy for him in his awful mesmerism.

"And that you claimed to be an Inca princess?" went on the merciless lawyer.

"Answer!" admonished the judge, looking severely down upon the silent girl.

Carmen sighed, and drew her gaze away from the windows. She was weary, oh, so weary of this unspeakable mockery. And yet she was there to prove her God.

"I would like to ask this further question," Ellis resumed, without waiting for her reply. "Were you not at one time in a resort conducted by Madam Cazeau, down on—"

He stopped short. The girl's eyes were looking straight into his, and they seemed to have pierced his soul. "I am sorry for you," she said gently, "oh, so sorry! Yes, I was once in that place."

The man knew not whether to smile in triumph or hide his head in shame. He turned to Hood. But Hood would not look at him. Ames alone met his embarrassed glance, and sent back a command to continue the attack.

Cass again rose and voiced his protest. What possible relation to the issue involved could such testimony have? But the judge bade him sit down, as the counsel for the prosecution doubtless was bringing out facts of greatest importance.

Ellis again cleared his throat and bent to his loathsome task. "Now, Miss Ariza, in reference to your labors to incite the mill hands at Avon to deeds of violence, the public con-

siders that as part of a consistent line of attack upon Mr. Ames, in which you were aiding others from whom you took your orders. May I ask you to cite the motives upon which you acted?"

Cass sank back in abject despair. Ketchim was being forgotten!

"We have not attacked Mr. Ames," she slowly replied, "but only the things he stands for. But you wouldn't understand."

Ellis smiled superciliously. "A militant brand of social uplift, I suppose?"

"No, Mr. Ellis, but just Christianity."

"H'm. And that is the sort of remedy that anarchists apply to industrial troubles, is it not?"

"There is no remedy for industrial troubles but Christianity," she said gently. "Not the burlesque Christianity of our countless sects and churches; not Roman Catholicism; not Protestantism; nor any of the fads and fancies of the human mind; but just the Christianity of Jesus of Nazareth, who knew that the human man was not God's image, but only stood for it in the mortal consciousness. And he always saw behind this counterfeit the real man, the true likeness of God. And—"

"You are diverging from the subject proper and consuming time, Miss Ariza!" interrupted the judge sternly.

Carmen did not heed him, but continued quietly:

"And it was just such a man that Jesus portrayed in his daily walk and words."

"Miss Ariza!" again commanded the judge.

"No," the girl went calmly on, "Jesus did not stand for the intolerance, the ignorance, the bigotry, the hatred, and the human hypothesis, the fraud, and chicanery, and the 'Who shall be greatest?' of human institutions. Nor did he make evil a reality, as mortals do. He knew it seemed awfully real to the deceived human consciousness; but he told that consciousness to be not afraid. And then he went to work and drove out the belief of evil on the basis of its nothingness and its total lack of principle. The orthodox churches and sects of to-day do not do that. Oh, no! They strive for world dominion! Their kingdom is wholly temporal, and is upheld by heartless millionaires, and by warlike kings and emperors. Their tenets shame the intelligence of thinking men! Yet they have slain tens of millions to establish them!"

What could the Court do? To remove the girl meant depriving Ames of his prey. But if she remained upon the stand, she would put them all to confusion, for they had no means of silencing her. The judge looked blankly at Ames; his hands were tied.

Ellis hurried to change the current of her talk by interposing another question.

"Will you tell us, Miss Carmen, why you have been working—"

"I have been working for God," she interrupted. Her voice was low and steady, and her eyes shone with a light that men are not wont to see in those of their neighbors. "I have not been working for men. He alone is my employer. And for Him I am here to-day."

Consternation was plainly discernible in the camp of the prosecution. Cass knew now that he need make no more objections. The defense had passed from his hands.

At this juncture James Ketchim, brother of the defendant, thinking to relieve the strain and embarrassment, gave audible voice to one of his wonted witticisms. All turned to look at him. But the effect was not what he had anticipated. No one laughed.

"Hold your tongue, Mr. Ketchim!" roared the exasperated judge, bending far over his desk. "You are just a smart little fool!" And the elder Ketchim retired in chagrin and confusion.

"Miss Carmen," pursued Ellis, eager to recover his advantage, for he saw significant movements among the jury, "do you not think the unfortunate results at Avon quite prove that you have allied yourself with those who oppose the nation's industrial progress?"

Carmen sat silent. Order had now been restored in the court room, and Ellis was feeling sure of himself again.

"You have opposed the constructive development of our country's resources by your assaults upon men of wealth, like Mr. Ames, for example, have you not?"

Then the girl opened her mouth, and from it came words that fell upon the room like masses of lead. "I stand opposed to any man, Mr. Ellis, who, to enrich himself, and for the purpose of revenge, spreads the boll weevil in the cotton fields of the South."

Dull silence descended upon the place. And yet it was a silence that fell crashing upon Ames's straining ears. He sat for a moment stunned; then sprang to his feet. All eyes were turned upon him. He held out a hand, and made as if to speak; then sank again into his chair.

Ellis stood as if petrified. Then Hood rose and whispered to him. Ellis collected himself, and turned to the judge.

"Your Honor, we regret to state that, from the replies which Miss Ariza has given, we do not consider her mentally competent as a witness. We therefore dismiss her."

But Cass had leaped to the floor. "Your Honor!" he cried. "I should like to examine the witness further!"

"She is dismissed!" returned the judge, glowering over his spectacles at the young lawyer.

"I stand on—"

"Sit down!" the judge bellowed.

"Miss Carmen!" called Cass through the rising tumult, "the lawyer for the prosecution has heaped insults upon you in his low references to your parentage. Will you—"

The judge pounded upon his desk with the remnant of his broken gavel. Then he summoned the bailiffs.

"I shall order the room cleared!" he called in a loud, threatening voice.

The murmur subsided. The judge sat down and mopped his steaming face. Hood and Ellis bent in whispered consultation. Ames was a study of wild, infuriated passion. Cass stood defiantly before the bar. Carmen sat quietly facing the crowded room. She had reached up and was fondling the little locket which hung at her throat. It was the first time she had ever worn it. It was not a pretty piece of jewelry; and it had never occurred to her to wear it until that day. Nor would she have thought of it then, had not the Beaubien brought it to the Tombs the night before in a little box with some papers which the girl had called for. Why she had put it on, she could not say.

Slowly, while the silence continued unbroken, the girl drew the slender chain around in front of her and unclasped it.

"I—I never—knew my parents," she murmured musingly, looking down lovingly at the little locket. Then she opened it and sat gazing, rapt and absorbed, at the two little portraits within. "But there are their pictures," she suddenly announced, holding the locket out to Cass.

It was said afterward that never in the history of legal procedure in New York had that court room held such dead silence as when Cass stood bending over the faces of the girl's earthly parents, portrayed in the strange little locket which Rosendo had taken from Badillo years before. Never had it known such a tense moment; never had the very air itself seemed so filled with a mighty, unseen presence, as on that day and in that crisal hour.

Without speaking, Hood rose and looked over Cass's shoulder at the locket. A muffled cry escaped him, and he turned and stared at Ames. The judge bent shaking over his desk.

"Mr. Hood!" he exclaimed. "Have you ever seen those pictures before?"

"Yes, sir," replied Hood in a voice that was scarcely heard.

"Where, sir?"

Hood seemed to have frozen to the spot. His hands shook, and his words gibbered from his trembling lips.

"The—the woman's portrait, sir—is—is—the one in—in Mr. Ames's yacht!"

"My God!"

The piercing cry rang through the still room like a lost soul's despairing wail. Ames had rushed from his seat, overturning his chair, thrusting the lawyers aside, and seized the locket. For a moment he peered wildly into it. It seemed as if his eyes would devour it, absorb it, push themselves clean through it, in their eagerness to grasp its meaning.

Then he looked up. His eyes were red; his face ashen; his lips white. His unsteady glance met the girl's. His mouth opened, and flapped like a broken shutter in the wind. His arms swung wildly upward; then dropped heavily. Suddenly he bent to one side; caught himself; straightened up; and then, with a horrifying, gurgling moan, crashed to the floor. The noise of the tremendous fall reverberated through the great room like an echo of Satan's plunge into the pit of hell.

Pandemonium broke upon the scene. Wild confusion seized the excited spectators. They rushed forward in a mass, over railings, over chairs and tables, heedless of all but the great mystery that was slowly clearing away in the dim light that winter's morning. Through them the white-haired man, clad in clerical vestments, elbowed his way to the bar.

"Let me see the locket!" he cried. "Let me see it!"

He tore it from Hood's hand and scanned it eagerly. Then he nodded his head. "The same! The very same!" he murmured, trembling with excitement. Then, shouting to the judge above the hubbub:

"Your Honor! I can throw some light upon this case!"

The crowd fell back.

"Who are you?" called the judge in a loud, quavering voice.

"I am Monsignor Lafelle. I have just returned from Europe. The woman's portrait in this little locket is that of Doña Dolores, Infanta, daughter of Queen Isabella the Second, of Spain! And this girl," pointing to the bewildered Carmen, who sat clinging to the arms of her chair, "is her child, and is a princess of the royal blood! Her father is the man who lies there—J. Wilton Ames!"

CHAPTER 18

BORNE on pulsing electric waves, the news of the great *dénoûment* flashed over the city, and across a startled continent. Beneath the seas it sped, and into court and hovel. Madrid gasped; Seville panted; and old Padre Rafaél de Rincón raised his hoary head and cackled shrilly.

To the seething court room came flying reporters and news gatherers, who threw themselves despairingly against the closed portals. Within, the bailiffs fought with the excited crowd, and held the doors against the panic without.

Over the prostrate form of Ames the physicians worked with feverish energy, but shook their heads.

In the adjoining ante-room, whither she had been half carried, half dragged by Hitt when Ames fell, sat Carmen, clasped in the Beaubien's arms, stunned, bewildered, and speechless. Hitt stood guard at the door; and Miss Wall and Jude tiptoed about with bated breath, unable to take their eyes from the girl.

In the court room without, Haynerd held the little locket, and plied Monsignor Lafelle with his incoherent questions. The excited editor's brain was afire; but of one thing he was well assured, the Express would bring out an extra that night that would scoop its rivals clean to the bone!

In a few minutes the bailiffs fought the mob back from the doors and admitted a man, a photographer, who had been sent out to procure chemicals in the hope that the portrait of the man in the locket might be cleaned. Ten minutes later the features of J. Wilton Ames stood forth clearly beside those of the wife of his youth. The picture showed him younger in appearance, to be sure, but the likeness was unmistakable.

"Lord! Lord! Monsignor, but you are slow! Come to the point quickly! We must go to press within an hour!" wailed Haynerd, shaking the churchman's arm in his excitement.

"But, what more?" cried Lafelle. "I saw the portrait in the Royal Gallery, years ago, in Madrid. It impressed me. I could not forget the sad, sweet face. I saw it again in the stained-glass window in the Ames yacht. I became suspicious. I inquired when I returned to Spain. There was much whispering, much shaking of heads, but little information. But this I know: the queen, the great Isabella, had a lover, a wonderful tenor, Marfori, Marquis de Loja. And one day a babe was taken quietly to a little cottage in the Granada hills. Rumor said that it was an Infanta, and that the tenor was its father. Who knew? One man, perhaps: old Rafaél de Rincón. But

Rome suddenly recalled him from Isabella's court, and after that he was very quiet."

"But, Ames?" persisted Haynerd.

Lafelle shrugged his shoulders. "Mr. Ames," he said, "traveled much in Europe. He went often to Spain. He bought a vineyard in Granada—the one from which he still procures his wine. And there—who knows?—he met the Infanta. But probably neither he nor she guessed her royal birth."

"Well! Good Lord! Then—?"

"Well, they eloped—who knows? Whether married or not, I can not say. But it is evident she went with him to Colombia, where, perhaps, he was seeking a concession from Congress in Bogotá. So far, so good. Then came the news of his father's sudden death. He hastened out of the country. Possibly he bade her wait for his return. But a prospective mother is often excitable. She waited a day, a week—who knows how long? And then she set out to follow him. Alas! she was wild to do such a thing. And it cost her life. She died at the little riverine town of Badillo, after her babe, Carmen, was born. Is it not plausible?"

"God above!" cried Haynerd. "And the girl's wonderful voice?"

"A heritage from her grandfather, the tenor, Marfori," Lafelle suggested.

"But—the portraits—what is the name under that of Ames? Guillermo? That is not his!"

"Yes, for Guillermo in Spanish is William. Doubtless Ames told her his name was Will, contracted from Wilton, the name he went by in his youth. And the nearest the Spanish could come to it was Guillermo. Diego's name was Guillermo Diego Polo. And after he had seen that name in the locket he used it as a further means of strengthening his claim upon the girl."

"Then—she is—a—princess!"

"Yes, doubtless, if my reasoning is correct. Not an Inca princess, but a princess of the reigning house of Spain."

Haynerd could hold himself no longer, but rushed madly from the room and tore across town to the office of the Express.

Then came the white-enameled ambulance, dashing and careening to the doors of the building where Ames lay so quiet. Gently, silently, the great body was lifted and borne below. And then the chattering, gesticulating mob poured from the court room, from the halls and corridors, and out into the chill sunlight of the streets, where they formed anew into little groups, and went over again the dramatic events but a few minutes past.

Then, too, emerged Carmen, heavily veiled from the curious,

vulgar gaze of the rabble, and entered the waiting limousine, with the Beaubien and Hitt. Miss Wall and the gasping Jude followed in another. The judge had bidden the girl go on her own recognizance. The arrest at Avon; the matter of bail; all had merged into the excitement of the hour and been forgotten. Ketchim went out on Cass's arm. The judge had ordered the clerk to enter an adjournment.

* * * * * *

All that afternoon and far into the night a gaping, wondering concourse braved the cold and stood about the walk that led up to the little Beaubien cottage. Within, the curtains were drawn, and Sidney, Jude, and Miss Wall answered the calls that came incessantly over the telephone and to the doors. Sidney had not been in the court room, for Haynerd had left him at the editor's desk in his own absence. But with the return of Haynerd the lad had hurried into a taxicab and commanded the chauffeur to drive madly to the Beaubien home. And once through the door, he clasped the beautiful girl in his arms and strained her to his breast.

"My sister!" he cried. "My own, my very own little sister! We only pretended before, didn't we? But now—now, oh, God above! you really are my sister!"

The scarce comprehending girl drew his head down and kissed him. "Sidney," she murmured, "the ways of God are past finding out!"

Aye, for again, as of old, He had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; He had chosen the weak to confound the mighty; and the base things, and the things despised, had He used to bring to naught the things that are. And why? That no flesh might glory in His terrible presence!

"Carmen!" cried the excited boy. "Think what this means to our book!"

The girl smiled up at him; then turned away. "My father!" she murmured. "He—my father!" she kept repeating, groping her way about the room as if in a haze. "He! It can't be! It *can't!*"

The still dazed Beaubien drew the girl into her arms. "My little princess!" she whispered. "Oh! But who would have dreamed it! Yet I called you that from the very first. But—oh, Carmen! And he—that man—your father!"

"Don't! Mother, don't! It—it isn't proved. It—"

Then the Beaubien's heart almost stopped. What if it were true? What, then, would this sudden turn in the girl's life mean to the lone woman who clung to her so?

"No, mother dearest," whispered Carmen, looking up through her tears. "For even if it should be true, I will not leave you. He—he—"

She stopped; and would speak of him no more.

But neither of them knew as yet that in that marvelous Fifth Avenue palace, behind those drawn curtains and guarded bronze doors, at which an eager crowd stood staring, Ames, the superman, lay dying, his left side, from the shoulder down, paralyzed.

* * * * * *

In the holy quiet of the first hours of morning, the mist rose, and the fallen man roused slowly out of his deep stupor. And then through the dim-lit halls of the great mansion rang a piercing cry. For when he awoke, the curtain stood raised upon his life; and the sight of its ghastly content struck wild terror to his naked soul.

He had dreamed as he lay there, dreamed while the mist was rising. He thought he had been toiling with feverish energy through those black hours, building a wall about the things that were his. And into the design of the huge structure he had fitted the trophies of his conquest. Gannette toiled with him, straining, sweating, groaning. Together they reared that monstrous wall; and as they labored, the man plotted the death of his companion when the work should be done, lest he ask for pay. And into the corners of the wall they fitted little skulls. These were the children of Avon who had never played. And over the great stones which they heaved into place they sketched red dollar-marks; and their paint was human blood. A soft wind swept over the rising structure, and it bore a gentle voice: "I am Love." But the toilers looked up and cursed. "Let us alone!" they cried. "Love is weakness!" And over the rim of the wall looked fair faces. "We are Truth, we are Life!" But the men frothed with fury, and hurled skulls at the faces, and bade them begone! A youth and a tender girl looked down at the sweating toilers. "We ask help; we are young, and times are so hard!" But the great man pointed to himself. "Look at me!" he cried. "I need no help! Begone!" And then the darkness settled down, for the wall was now so high that it shut out the sun. And the great man howled with laughter; the wall was done. So he turned and smote his companion unto death, and dipped his hands in the warm blood of the quivering corse.

But the darkness was heavy. The man grew lonely. And then he sought to mount the wall. But his hands slipped on the human blood of the red, slimy dollar-marks, and he fell crashing back among his tinkling treasures. He rose, and tried again. The naked, splitting skulls leered at him. The toothless jaws clattered, and the eyeless sockets glowed eerily. The man raised his voice. He begged that a rope be lowered. He

would go out once more into the sun-lit world. But the chill wind brought him only despairing moans.

Then he rushed madly to the wall, and smote it with his bare hands. It mocked him with the strength which he had given it. He turned and tore his hair and flesh. He gnashed his teeth until they broke into bits. He cursed; he raved; he pleaded; he offered all his great treasure for freedom. But the skulls grinned their horrid mockery at him; and the blood on the stones dripped upon his burning head. And above it all he heard the low plotting of those without who were awaiting his death, that they might throw down the wall and take away his treasure.

And then his fear became frenzy; his love of gold turned to horror; his reason fled; and he dashed himself wildly against the prison which he had reared, until he fell, bleeding and broken. And as he fell, he heard the shrill cackle of demons that danced their hellish steps on the top of the wall. Then the Furies flew down and bound him tight.

"Ah, my God,
What might I not have made of Thy fair world
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known."

He awoke from his terror, dripping. He feebly lifted his head. Then he sought to raise his arms, to move. He was alive! And then the scream tore from his dry throat. His great body was half dead!

The attendants flew to his couch. The physicians bent over him and sought to soothe his mental agony. The man's torture was fearful to behold; his weakness, pitiable. He sank again into somnolence. But the sleep was one of unbroken horror; and those in the room stopped in the course of their duties; and their faces blanched; and they held their hands to their ears, when his awful moans echoed through the curtained room.

Through his dreams raced the endless panorama of his crowded life. Now he was wading through muddy slums where stood the wretched houses which he rented for immoral purposes. He was madly searching for something. What could it be? Ah, yes, his girl! Some one had said she was there. Who was it? Aye, who but himself? But he found her not. And he wept bitterly.

And then he hurried to Avon; and there he dug into those fresh graves—dug, dug, dug, throwing the dirt up in great heaps behind him. And into the face of each corpse as he

dragged it out of its damp bed he peered eagerly. But with awful moans he threw them from him in turn, for she was not there.

Then he fled down, down, far into the burning South; and there he roamed the trackless wastes, calling her name. And the wild beasts and the hissing serpents looked out at him from the thick bush, looked with great, red eyes, and then fled from him with loathing. And, suddenly, he came upon another mound near the banks of a great river. And over it stood a rude cross; and on the cross he read the dim, penciled word, *Dolores*. Ah, God! how he cried out for the oblivion that was not his. But the ghastly mound froze his blood, and he rushed from it in terror, and fell, whirling over and over, down, down into eternal blackness filled with dying men's groans!

The awful day drew to a close. The exhausted attendants stood about the bed with bated breath. The physicians had called Doctor Morton in consultation, for the latter was a brain specialist. And while they sat gazing at the crazed, stricken giant, hopelessly struggling to lift the inert mass of his dead body, Reverend Darius Borwell entered. He bowed silently to them all; then went to the bedside and took the patient's hand. A moment later he turned to the physicians and nurses.

"Let us ask God's help for Mr. Ames," he said gravely.

They bowed, and he knelt beside the bed and prayed long and earnestly; prayed that the loving Father who had made man in His image would take pity on the suffering one who lay there, and, if it be His will, spare him for Jesus' sake.

He arose from his knees, and they all sat quiet for some moments. Then Doctor Morton's heavy voice broke the silence of death. "Mr. Borwell," he said in awful earnestness, extending his hand toward the bed, "cure that man, if your religion is anything more than a name!"

A hot flush of indignation spread over the minister's face; but he did not reply. Doctor Morton turned to the physicians.

"Gentlemen," he said solemnly, "Mr. Ames, I think, is past our aid. There is nothing on earth that can save him. If he lives, he will be hopelessly insane." He hesitated, and turned to a maid. "Where is his daughter Kathleen?" he asked.

"Upstairs, sir, in her apartments," answered the maid, wiping her red eyes.

"See that she remains there," said the doctor gruffly. "Gentlemen," turning again to the physicians, "I have but one suggestion. Send for—for—that little girl, Carmen."

"It is ill-advised, Doctor," interrupted one of the men. "It would only further excite him. It might hasten the end."

"I do not agree with you," returned Doctor Morton. "As it is, he is doomed. With her here—there may be a chance."

The others shook their heads; but Doctor Morton persisted stubbornly. Finally Doctor Haley gave his ultimatum. "If she is sent for, I shall retire from the case."

"Very well," announced Doctor Morton evenly, "then I will take it myself." He rose and went out into the vestibule where there was a telephone. Calling for the Beaubien cottage, he gave a peremptory order that Carmen come at once in the automobile which he was sending for her.

The Beaubien turned from the telephone to the girl. Her face was deathly pale.

"What is it, mother dearest?"

"They—they want—you!"

"Why—is it—is he—"

"They say he is—dying," the woman whispered.

Carmen stood for a minute as if stunned. "Why—I—didn't know—that there was—anything wrong. Mother, you didn't tell me! Why?"

The Beaubien threw her arms around the girl. Father Waite rose from the table where he had been writing, and came to them.

"Go," he said to Carmen. "The Lord is with thee! Go in this thy might!"

A few minutes later the great bronze doors of the Ames mansion swung wide to admit the daughter of the house.

Doctor Morton met the wondering girl, and led her directly into the sick-room. The other physicians had departed.

"Miss Carmen," he said gravely, "Mr. Ames is past earthly help. He can not live."

The girl turned upon him like a flash from a clear sky. "You mean, he *shall* not live!" she cried. "For you doctors have sentenced him!"

The startled man bowed before the rebuke. Then a sense of her magnificent environment, of her strange position, and of the vivid events of the past few hours swept over her, and she became embarrassed. The nurses and attendants, too, who stood about and stared so hard at her, added to her confusion.

But the doctor took her hand. "Listen," he said, "I am leaving now, but you will remain. If I am needed, one of the maids will summon me."

Carmen stood for a moment without speaking. Then she walked slowly to the bed and looked down at the man. Doctor Morton motioned to the attendants to withdraw. Then he himself stepped softly out and closed the door. When the girl turned around, she was alone—with death.

CHAPTER 19

A CURIOUS, gossiping world, dwelling only in the froth of the human mind, will not comprehend for many a year to come what took place in that dim, tapestried chamber of the rich man in those next hours. When twilight began to steal through the marble halls of the great, shrouded mansion, the nurse in charge, becoming apprehensive, softly opened the door of the sick-room and peeped in. Through the darkness she saw the girl, sitting beside the bed, with the man's right hand clasped in both of hers, and her head resting upon his shoulder. And the nurse quickly closed the door again in awe, and stole away.

The girl sat there all that day and all that night, nor would leave but for brief moments to eat, or to reassure the Beaubien over the telephone that all was well. Doctor Morton came, and went, and came again. Carmen smiled, and held his hand for a moment each time, but said little. Ames had slept. And, more, his cheeks were stained where the scalding tears had coursed down them. But the doctor would ask no questions. He was satisfied. The nurses entered only when summoned. And three days and nights passed thus, while Carmen dwelt with the man who, as the incarnation of error, seeking the destruction of others, had destroyed himself.

Then Doctor Morton announced to a waiting world that his patient would live—but he would say no more. And the world heard, too, that Kathleen Ames had left her father's roof —left in humiliation and chagrin when she learned that Carmen had come there to live—and had gone to England for a prolonged visit with the Dowager Duchess of Altern and her now thoroughly dismayed son. But Sidney came; and with him the black-veiled Beaubien. And they both knelt beside the bed of suffering; and the hand of the now quiet man slowly went out and lay for a moment upon their bowed heads, while Carmen stood near. Then Willett was sent for; and he came often after that, and took his master's scarce audible instructions, and went away again to touch the wires and keys that ended the war of hatred at Avon; that brought Father Danny in the master's private car to the great metropolitan hospital; that sent to the startled Hitt the canceled mortgage papers on the Express; and that inaugurated that great work of restitution which held the dwellers in the Ames mansion toiling over musty books and forgotten records for months to come.

What had passed between the man and the sweet-faced girl

who hovered over him like a ray of light, no one may know. That he had trod the glowing embers of hell, his cavernous, deep-lined face and whitening hair well testified. It was said afterward that on that third day he had opened his eyes and looked straight into those of the girl. It was said that she then whispered but one word, "Father." And that, when the sound of her low voice fell upon his straining ears, he had reached out the arm that still held life, and had drawn her head down upon his breast, and wept like a motherless babe. But what he had said, if aught, about the abandoned mother who, on the banks of the distant river, years gone, had yielded her life to him and his child, no one knew. Of but one thing was there any certainty: the name of Padre José de Rincón had not crossed their lips during those dark days.

And so two weeks passed. Then strong men lifted the giant from his bed and placed him in a wheel chair; and Carmen drew the chair out into the conservatory, among the ferns and flowers, and sat beside him, his hand still clasped in both of hers. That he had found life, no one who marked his tense, eager look, which in every waking moment lay upon the girl, could deny. His body was dead; his soul was fluttering feebly into a new sense of being.

But with the awakening of conscience, in the birth-throes of a new life, came the horrors, the tortures, the wild frenzy of self-loathing; and, but for the girl who clung so desperately to him, he would have quickly ended his useless existence. What had he done! God! What mad work had he done! He was a murderer of helpless babes! He was the blackest of criminals! The stage upon which the curtain had risen, whereon he saw the hourly portrayal of his own fiendish deeds, stood always before him like a haunting spectre; and as he gazed with horrified eyes, his hair grew hourly white.

And the torture was rendered more poignant by the demands of his erstwhile associates and henchmen. They had taken fright at the first orders which had issued from the sick-bed, but now they swooped down upon the harassed man to learn what might be expected from him in the future. What were to be his policies now in regard to those manifold interests which he was pursuing with such vigor a few weeks ago? Was he still bent upon depriving Senator Gossitch of the seat which the Ames money had purchased? Was the Ketchim prosecution to continue? The Amalgamated Spinners' Association must know at once his further plans. The Budget needed money and advice. His great railroad projects, his mining ventures, his cotton deals, his speculations and gambling schemes—whither should they tend now? Ward bosses, dive

keepers, bank presidents, lawyers, magnates, and preachers clamored for admission at his doors when they learned that he would live, but that a marvelous, incomprehensible change had swept over him.

The tired, hectored man turned to Carmen. And she called Hitt and Waite and the keen-minded Beaubien. The latter's wide business experience and worldly knowledge now stood them all in good stead, and she threw herself like a bulwark between the stricken man and the hounds that roared at his gates. There were those among them who, like Ames, had bitterly fought all efforts at industrial and social reform, and yet who saw the dawning of a new era in the realms of finance, of politics, of religion. There were those who sensed the slow awakening of the world-conscience, and who resisted it desperately, and who now sat frightened and angered at the thought of losing their great leader. Their attitude toward life, like his, had been wrong from the beginning; they, like him, were striking examples of the dire effects of a false viewpoint in the impoverishing of human life. But, with him, they had built up a tremendous material fabric. And now they shook with fear as they saw its chief support removed. For they must know that his was a type that was fast passing, and after it must come the complete breakdown of the old financial order. His world-embracing gambling—which touched all men in some way, for it had to do with the very necessities of life, with crops, with railroads, with industries, and out of which he had coined untold millions—had ceased forever. What did it portend to them?

And to him also came Reverend Darius Borwell, in whose congregation sat sanctimonious malefactors of vast wealth, whose pockets bulged with disease-laden profits from the sales of women's bodies and souls. Reverend Borwell came to offer the sufferer the dubious consolations of religion—and inquire if his beautiful change of heart would affect the benefaction which he had designed for the new church.

Ah, this was the hour when the fallen giant faced the Apostle's awful question: What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? *For the end of those things is death!*

And then came Monsignor Lafelle, asking not to see the sick man, but the girl. And, alone with her in the great library that day, he bent low over her hand and begged that she would forgive and forget. It was he who told Mrs. Ames that flagrantly false tale of the girl's parentage. He had received it from Wenceslas, in Cartagena. It was he who, surmising the dark secret of Ames, had concluded that the supposed

Infanta had been his wife. And he had returned to New York to confront him with the charge, and to make great capital out of it. But he had never suspected for a moment Carmen's connection with the mystery. And now—

But the girl saw only the image of God in the humiliated man. And when he kissed her hand and departed, she bade him know, always, that she loved him as a brother. And he knew it, knew that her love was of the spirit—it left all for the Christ.

A few days later there was delivered at the Ames mansion a cable message from Cartagena, in reply to one which the master had sent to the lawyer, Estrella. Ames shook with suppressed excitement when he read it. Then he bade Carmen send at once for Hitt, Willett, and Captain McCall, and leave them with him for a private conference.

"She must not know! She must not know!" Ames repeated, as the three men sat leaning eagerly forward an hour later, drinking in every word he spoke. "If the mission is successful, well and good. If it fails, then our silence now will be justified, for as yet I have said nothing to her regarding him. Peace is being concluded there. Wenceslas has won—but with—but of that later. When can you get under way, McCall?"

"To-night, sir. The bunkers are full."

"Very good. I will go aboard at ten. You will weigh anchor immediately."

"What?" cried Hitt. "You will go?"

"I will!" The sudden flash of his old-time energy nearly startled them from their chairs. "And," he added, "you, Mr. Hitt, will accompany us. Now, Willett, have the door of my limousine widened to accommodate this wheel chair. I want a dozen men to insure our privacy, and to keep the way clear. No one not in our confidence must see us depart."

Hitt gasped. "But—Carmen—"

"Goes with us," returned Ames. "I can not spare her for a moment. Madam Beaubien will have charge of the house during our absence. We will be back here, weather favorable, in three weeks—or not at all!"

"Yet, she will know—"

"Nothing. I take the trip, ostensibly, for the change; to get away from those who are hounding me here; for recuperation—anything! Go, now, and make ready!" The man's eyes glistened like live coals, and his sunken cheeks took on a feverish glow.

That night the *Cossack*, enveloped in gloom, steamed noiselessly out of New York harbor, and turned her prow to the

South. And when she had entered the high sea, Captain McCall from his bridge aloft sent a message down to the waiting engineer:

"Full speed ahead!"

CHAPTER 20

CARTAGENA'S slumber of centuries had been broken by nearly four years of civil warfare. But on the day that the lookout in the abandoned convent of Santa Candelaria, on the summit of La Popa, flashed the message down into the old city that a steam yacht had appeared on the northern horizon, she was preparing to sink back again into quiet dreams. For peace was being concluded among the warring political factions. The country lay devastated and blood-soaked; but the cause of Christ had triumphed, and the Church still sat supreme in the councils of Bogotá. Cartagena was *en fête;* the last of the political agitators would be executed on the morrow. And so the lookout's message was received with indifference, even though he embellished it with the comment that the boat must be privately owned, as no ships of the regular lines were due to arrive that day.

Quietly the graceful craft swept down past Tierra Bomba and into the Boca Chica, between the ancient forts of San Fernando and San José, and came to anchor out in the beautiful harbor, a half mile from the ancient gate of the clock. A few curious idlers along the shore watched it and commented on its perfect lines. And the numerous officials of the port lazily craned their necks at it, and yawningly awaited the arrival of the skiff that was immediately lowered and headed for the pier.

The tall American who stepped from the little boat and came at once to them to show his papers, easily satisfied their curiosity, for many tourists of the millionaire class dropped anchor in Cartagena's wonderful harbor, and came ashore to wander among the decaying mementos of her glorious past. And this boat was not a stranger to these waters. On the yacht itself, as they glanced again toward it, there was no sign of life. Even the diminishing volume of smoke that rose from its funnels evidenced the owner's intention of spending some time in that romantic spot.

From the dock, Hitt passed through the old gateway in the massive wall, quickly crossed the *Plaza de Coches,* and lost himself in the gay throngs that were entering upon the day's

festivities. Occasionally he dropped into wine shops and little stores, and lingered about to catch stray bits of gossip. Then he slowly made his way up past the Cathedral and into the *Plaza de Simón Bolívar.*

For a while, sitting on a bench in front of the equestrian statue of the famous *Libertador,* he watched the passing crowds. From time to time his glance strayed over toward the Cathedral. Once he rose, and started in that direction; then came back and resumed his seat. It was evident that he was driven hard, and yet knew not just what course to pursue.

Finally he jumped to his feet and went over to a little cigar store which had caught his eye. He bent over the soiled glass case and selected several cigars from the shabby stock. Putting one of them into his mouth, he lighted it, and then casually nodded to a powerfully built man standing near.

The latter turned to the proprietor and made some comment in Spanish. Hitt immediately replied to it in the same tongue. The man flushed with embarrassment; then doffed his hat and offered an apology. "I forget, señor," he said, "that so many Americans speak our language."

Hitt held out his hand and laughed heartily at the incident. Then his eye was attracted by a chain which the man wore.

"May I examine it?" he asked, bending toward it.

"Cierto, señor," returned the man cordially. "It came from an Indian grave up in Guamocó. I am a *guaquero*—grave digger—by profession; Jorge Costal, by name."

Hitt glanced up at the man. Somehow he seemed to be familiar with that name. Somewhere he seemed to have heard it. But on whose lips? Carmen's? "Suppose," he said, in his excellent Spanish, "that we cross the *Plaza* to yonder wine shop. You may be able to tell me some of the history of this interesting old town. And—it would be a great favor, señor."

The man bowed courteously and accepted the invitation. A few moments later they sat at a little table, with a bottle between them, commenting on the animated scene in the street without.

"Peace will be concluded to-day, they say," reflected Hitt, by way of introduction.

"Yes," returned the man grimly, "there is but little more blood to let. That flows to-morrow."

"Political agitators?" Hitt suggested.

The man's face darkened. "Only one," he muttered. "The other is—"

He stopped and eyed Hitt furtively. But the American manifested only a casual interest.

"Their names?" he asked nonchalantly.

"They were posted this morning," said the man. "Amado Jesus Fanor and José de Rincón."

Hitt started, but held himself. "Who—who are they?" he asked in a controlled voice.

"A liberal general and an ex-priest."

"Ex-priest?" exclaimed Hitt.

The man looked at him wonderingly. "Yes, señor. Why?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing. It is the custom to—to shoot ex-priests down here, eh?"

"*Caramba!* No! But this man—señor, why do you ask?"

"Well—it struck me as curious—that's all," returned Hitt, at a loss for a suitable answer. "You didn't happen to know these men, I presume?"

"*Na, señor,* you seek to involve me. Who are you, that you ask such questions of a stranger?" The man reflected the suspicious caution of these troublous times.

"Why, *amigo,* it is of no concern to me," replied Hitt easily, flicking the ashes from his cigar. "I once knew a fellow by that name. Met him here years ago. Learned that he afterward went to Simití. But I—"

"Señor!" cried the man, starting up. "Are you the *Americano,* the man who explored?"

"I am," said Hitt, bending closer to him. "And we are well met, for you are Don Jorge, who knew Padre José de Rincón in Simití, no?"

The man cast a timid glance around the room. "Señor," he whispered, "we must not say these things here! I leave you now—"

"Not yet!" Hitt laid a hand upon his. "Where is he?" he demanded in a low voice.

"In San Fernando, señor."

"And how long?"

"A year, I think. He was first three years in the prison in Cartagena. But the Bish—"

"Eh? Don Wenceslas had him removed to San Fernando?"

The man nodded.

"And—"

"He will be shot to-morrow, señor."

Hitt thought with desperate rapidity. Then he looked up. "Why do you say he is an ex-priest?" he asked.

"He has just been excommunicated," replied the man. "Cursed, they say, by bell, book, and candle."

"Good heavens! That he might be shot? Ah, I see it all! Ames's message! Of course Don Wenceslas would not dare to execute a priest in good standing. And so he had him excommunicated, eh?"

Don Jorge shrugged his shoulders. *"Quien sabe?"* he muttered.

Hitt sat for a while in a deep study. Time was precious. And yet it was flying like the winds. Then he roused up.

"You knew a little girl—in Simití—in whom this Rincón was interested?"

"Ah, yes, señor. But—why do you ask? She went to the great States from which you come. And I think little was heard from her after that."

"Eh? Yes, true. She lived with—"

"Don Rosendo Ariza."

"Yes. And he?"

"Dead—he and his good wife, Doña Maria."

Hitt's head sank. How could he break this to Carmen? Then he sprang to his feet. "Come," he said, "we will stroll down by the walls. I would like a look at San Fernando."

"Ha! Señor, you—you—"

Hitt threw him a look of caution, and shook his head. Then, motioning him to follow, he led him out and down through the winding, tortuous thoroughfares. On the summit of the walls were sentinels, posted at frequent intervals; and no civilian might walk upon the great enclosure until peace had been formally declared.

Hailing a passing carriage, Hitt urged the wondering Don Jorge into it, and bade the driver convey them to the old ruin of San Felipe, and leave them. There they climbed the broken incline into the battered fortress, and seated themselves in the shadow of a crumbling parapet. They were alone on the enormous, grass-grown pile. From their position they commanded a wonderful view across the town and harbor, and far out over the green waters of the Caribbean. The *Cossack* lay asleep in the quiet harbor. Don Jorge saw it, and wondered whence it came.

"Listen, *amigo,*" began Hitt, pointing to the yacht. "In that boat is a girl, whose dearest earthly treasure is the condemned prisoner out there in San Fernando. That girl is the little Carmen, foster-daughter of old Rosendo."

"Hombre!" cried Don Jorge, staring at Hitt as if he suspected his sanity.

"It is true, friend, for I myself came with her in that boat."

"Caramba!"

"And," continued Hitt, glancing again about the ruined fortress and lowering his voice, "we have come for José de Rincón."

"Santa Virgen! Are you *loco?"*

Hitt smiled. "And now," he went on eagerly, "how are we to get him?"

"But, *amigo!* San Fernando is closely guarded! And he—*por supuesto,* he will be in the dungeons!"

"No doubt," returned Hitt dryly, "if your excellent friend Wenceslas has had anything to do with it. But dungeons have windows, eh?"

"*Caramba,* yes; and San Fernando's are just above the water's edge. And when the waves are high the sea pours into them!"

"And—could we learn which window is his, do you think?"

"Señor, I know," replied the man.

"Ha! And—"

"I learned from one of the soldiers, Fernando, who once lived in Simití. I had thought, señor, that—that perhaps I—"

"That perhaps you might make the attempt yourself, eh?" put in Hitt eagerly.

Don Jorge nodded. Hitt sprang to his feet and looked out toward the silent fortress.

"Don Jorge, it is dark out over the harbor at night, eh? No searchlights?"

"None, señor."

Hitt began to pace back and forth, Suddenly he stopped, and stood looking down through a hole in the broken pavement. Then he knelt and peered long and eagerly into it.

"Look here, friend," he called. "How does one get into that place?"

Don Jorge came and looked into the aperture. "It is one of the rooms of the fortress," he said. "But—*caramba!* I know not how it may be reached."

"The passageways?"

"Caved—all of them."

"But—you are a mighty husky fellow; and I am not weak. Suppose we try lifting one of these flags."

"*Na, señor,* as well try the tunnels! But, why?"

Hitt did not answer. But, bidding Don Jorge follow, he sought the fallen entrance to the old fortress, and plunged into the dark passage that led off from it into the thick gloom. Groping his way down a long, damp corridor, he came to a point where three narrower, brick-lined tunnels branched off, one of them dipping into the earth at a sharp angle. He struck a match, and then started down this, followed by the wondering Don Jorge.

A thousand bats, hideous denizens of these black tunnels, flouted their faces and disputed their progress. Don Jorge slapped wildly at them, and cursed low. Hitt took up a long club and struck savagely about him. On they stumbled, until the match flickered out, and they were left in Stygian black-

ness, with the imps of darkness whirring madly about them. Hitt struck another match, and plunged ahead.

At length they found the way blocked by a mass of rubbish which had fallen from the roof. Hitt studied it for a moment, then climbed upon it and, by the aid of the feeble light from his matches, peered into the foul blackness beyond.

"Come," he said, preparing to proceed.

"Na, amigo! Not I!" exclaimed Don Jorge. His Latin soul had revolted.

"Then wait for me here," said Hitt, pushing himself through the narrow aperture at the top of the rubbish, and fighting the horde of terrified bats.

A few minutes later he returned, covered with slime, and scratched and bleeding. "All right," he muttered. "Now let's get out of this miserable hole!"

Out in the sunlight once more, Hitt sought to remove the stains from his clothes, meanwhile bidding Don Jorge attend well to his words.

"You swim, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then do you come to the beach to-night to bathe, down across from the yacht. And, listen well: you would do much for the little Carmen, no? And for your friend José? Very good. You will swim out to the yacht at seven to-night, with your clothes in a bundle on your head, eh? And, Don Jorge—but we will discuss that later. Now you go back to the city alone. I have much to do. And, note this, you have not seen me."

Meantime, to the group of politicians, soldiers, and clergy assembled in the long audience room of the departmental offices to debate the terms of the peace protocol, news of the arrival of the *Cossack* was brought by a slow-moving messenger from the dock. At the abrupt announcement the acting-Bishop was seen to start from his chair. Was the master himself on board? *Quien sabe?* And, if so—but, impossible! He would have advised his faithful co-laborer of his coming. And yet, what were those strange rumors which had trickled over the wires, and which, in his absorption in the local issues, and in the excitement attendant upon the restoration of peace and the settlement of the multifold claims of innumerable greedy politicians, he had all but forgotten? A thousand suggestions flashed through his mind, any one of which might account for the presence of the *Cossack* in Cartagena's harbor that day. But extreme caution must be observed until he might ascertain its errand. He therefore despatched a message to the yacht, expressing his great surprise and pleasure, and bidding its

master meet him at a convenient hour in his study in the Cathedral. This done, he bent anew to the work before him, yet with his thought harried by doubt, suspicion, and torturing curiosity.

Wenceslas soon received a reply to his message. The master was aboard, but unable to go ashore. The acting-Bishop would therefore come to him at once.

Wenceslas hesitated, and his brow furrowed. He knew he was called upon to render his reckoning to the great financier who had furnished the sinews of war. But he must have time to consider thoroughly his own advantage, for well he understood that he was summoned to match his own keen wits with those of a master mind.

And then there flashed through his thought the reports which had circled the world but three short weeks before. The man of wealth had found his daughter; and she was the girl for whom the two Americans had outwitted him four years ago! And the girl—Simiti—and—ah, Rincón! Good! He laughed outright. He would meet the financier—but not until the morrow, at noon, for, he would allege, the unanticipated arrival of Ames had found this day completely occupied. So he again despatched his wondering messenger to the *Cossack*. And that messenger was rowed out to the quiet yacht in the same boat with the tall American, whose clothes were torn and caked with mud, and in whose eyes there glowed a fierce determination.

That night the sky was overcast. The harbingers of the wet season had already arrived. At two in the morning the rain came, descending in a torrent. In the midst of it a light skiff, rocking dangerously on the swelling sea, rounded a corner of San Fernando and crept like a shadow along the dull gray wall. The sentry above had taken shelter from the driving rain. The ancient fort lay heavily shrouded in gloom.

At one of the narrow, grated windows which were set just above the water's surface the skiff hung, and a long form arose from its depths and grasped the iron bars. A moment later the gleam of an electric lantern flashed into the blackness within. It fell upon a rough bench, standing in foul, slime-covered water. Upon the bench sat the huddled form of a man.

Then another dark shape rose in the skiff. Another pair of hands laid hold on the iron bars. And behind those great, calloused hands stretched thick arms, with the strength of an ox. An iron lever was inserted between the bars. The heavy breathing and the low sounds of the straining were drowned by the tropic storm. The prisoner leaped from the bench and stood ankle-deep in the water, straining his eyes upward.

The light flashed again into his face. His heart pounded wildly. His throbbing ears caught the splash of a knotted rope falling into the water at his feet. Above the noise of the rain he thought he heard a groaning, creaking sound. Those rusted, storm-eaten bars in the blackness above must be slowly yielding to an awful pressure. He turned and dragged the slime-covered bench to the window, and stood upon it. Then he grasped the rope with a strength born anew of hope and excitement, and pulled himself upward. The hands from without seized him; and slowly, painfully, his emaciated body was crushed through the narrow space between the bent bars.

* * * * * *

Cartagena awoke to experience another thrill. And then the ripple of excitement gave place to anger. The rabble had lost one of its victims, and that one the chief. Moreover, the presence of that graceful yacht, sleeping so quietly out there in the sun-lit harbor, could not but be associated with that most daring deed of the preceding night, which had given liberty to the excommunicated priest and political malefactor, José de Rincón. Crowds of chattering, gesticulating citizens gathered along the harbor shores, and loudly voiced their disappointment and threats. But the boat lay like a thing asleep. Not even a wisp of smoke rose from its yellow funnels.

Then came the Alcalde, and the Departmental Governor, grave and sedate, with their aids and secretaries, their books and documents, their mandates and red-sealed processes, and were rowed out to confront the master whom they believed to have dared to thwart the hand of justice and remain to taunt them with his egregious presence. This should be made an international episode, whose ramifications would wind down through years to come, and embrace long, stupid congressional debates, apologies demanded, huge sums to salve a wounded nation, and the making and breaking of politicians too numerous to mention!

But the giant who received them, bound to his chair, in the splendid library of the palatial yacht, and with no attendant, save a single valet, flared out in a towering rage at the gross insult offered him and his great country in these black charges. He had come on a peaceful errand; partly, too, for reasons of health. And he was at that moment awaiting a visit from His Grace. What manner of reception was this, that Cartagena extended to an influential representative of the powerful States of the North!

"But," the discomfited Indignation Committee gasped, "what of the tall American who was seen to land the day before?"

The master laughed in their faces. He? Why, but a poor, obsessed archaeologist, now prowling around the ruins of San Felipe, doubtless mumbling childishly as he prods the dust and mold of centuries! Go, visit him, if they would be convinced!

And when these had gone, chagrined and mortified—though filled with wonder, for they had roamed the *Cossack,* and peered into its every nook and cranny, and stopped to look a second time at the fair-haired young boy who looked like a girl, and hovered close to the master—came His Grace, Wenceslas. He came alone, and with a sneer curling his imperious lips. And his calm, arrogant eyes held a meaning that boded no good to the man who sat in his wheel chair, alone, and could not rise to welcome him.

"A very pretty trick, my powerful friend," said the angered churchman in his perfect English. "And one that will cause your Government at Washington some—"

"Enough!" interrupted Ames in a steady voice. "I sent for you yesterday, intending to ask you to release the man. I had terms then which would have advantaged you greatly. You were afraid to see me until you had evolved your plans of opposition. Only a fixed and devilish hatred, nourished by you against a harmless priest who possessed your secrets, doomed him to die to-day. But we will pass that for the present. I have here my demands for the aid I have furnished you. You may look them over." He held out some typewritten sheets to Wenceslas.

The churchman glanced hastily over them; then handed them back with a smile.

"With certain modifications," he said smoothly. "The terms on which peace is concluded will scarcely admit of—"

"Very well," returned Ames quietly. "And now, La Libertad?"

Wenceslas laughed. *"En manos muertas,* my friend," he replied. "It was your own idea."

"And the emerald concession?"

"Impossible! A government monopoly, you know," said His Grace easily. "You see, my friend, it is a costly matter to effect the escape of state prisoners. As things stand now, your little trick of last night quite protects me. For, first you instruct me, long ago, to place the weak little José in San Fernando; and I obey. Then you suffer a change of heart, and slip down here to release the man, who has become a state prisoner. That quite removes you from any claims upon us for a share of the spoils of war. I take it, you do not wish to risk exposure of your part in this four years' carnage?"

Ames drew a sigh. Then he pulled himself together. "Wen-

ceslas," he said, "I am not the man with whom you dealt in these matters. He is dead. I have but one thing more to say, and that is that I renounce all claims upon you and your Government, excepting one. La Libertad mine was owned by the Rincón family. It was rediscovered by old Rosendo, and the title transferred to his foster-daughter. Its possession must remain with her and her associates. There is no record, so you have informed me, to the effect that the Church possesses this mine."

"But, my friend, there shall be such a record to-day," laughed Wenceslas. "And, in your present situation, you will hardly care to contest it."

Ames smiled. He now had the information which he had been seeking. The title to the famous mine lay still with the Simití company. He pressed the call-button attached to his chair. The door opened, and Don Jorge entered, leading the erstwhile little newsboy, José de Rincón, by the hand.

Wenceslas gasped, and staggered back. He knew not the man; but the boy was a familiar figure.

Don Jorge advanced straight to him. Their faces almost touched.

"Your Grace, were you married to the woman by whom you had this son?" Don Jorge's steady words fell upon the churchman's ears like a sentence of death.

"I ask," continued the dark-faced man, "because I learned last night that the lad's mother was my daughter, the little Maria."

"Santa Virgen!"

"Yes, Your Grace, a sainted virgin, despoiled by a devil! And the man who gave me this information—would you like to know? *Bien*, it was Padre José de Rincón, in whose arms she died, you lecherous dog!"

Wenceslas paled, and his brow grew moist. He stared at the boy, and then at the strong man whom he had so foully wronged.

"If you have concluded your talk with Señor Ames," continued Don Jorge, "we will go ashore—you and the lad and I."

Wenceslas's face brightened. Ashore! Yes, by all means!

The trio turned and quietly left the room. Gaining the deck, Wenceslas found a skiff awaiting them, and two strong sailors at the oars. Don Jorge urged him on, and together they descended the ladder and entered the boat. A few moments later they landed at the pier, and the skiff turned back to the yacht.

As to just what followed, accounts vary. There were some who remembered seeing His Grace pass through the narrow

streets with a dark-skinned, powerful man, whose hand grasped that of the young newsboy. There were others who said that they saw the boy leave them at the Cathedral, and the two men turn and enter. Still others said they saw the heavy-set man come out alone. But there was only one who discovered the body of Wenceslas, crumpled up in a hideous heap upon the floor of his study, with a poignard driven clean through his heart. That man was the old sexton, who fled screaming from the awful sight late that afternoon.

Again Cartagena shook with excitement, and seethed with mystery. Had the escaped prisoner, Rincón, returned to commit this awful deed? There were those who said he had. For the dark-skinned man who had entered the Cathedral with His Grace was seen again on the streets and in the wine shops that afternoon, and had been marked by some mounting the broken incline of San Felipe.

Again the Governor and Alcalde and their numerous suite paid a visit to the master on board the *Cossack*. But they learned only that His Grace had gone ashore long before he met his fearful death. And so the Governor returned to the city, and was driven to San Felipe. But his only reward was the sight of the obsessed archaeologist, mud-stained and absorbed, prying about the old ruins, and uttering little cries of delight at new discoveries of crumbling passageways and caving rooms. And so there was nothing for the disturbed town to do but settle down and ponder the strange case.

A week later smoke was seen again pouring out of the *Cossack's* funnels. That same day the Governor and Alcalde and their suites were bidden to a farewell banquet on board the luxurious yacht. Far into the night they sat over their rare wines and rich food, drinking deep healths to the *entente cordial* which existed between the little republic of the South and the great one of the North. And while they drank and sang and listened enraptured to the wonderful pipe-organ, a little boat put out from the dark, tangled shrubbery along the shore. And when it rubbed against the yacht, a muffled figure mounted the ladder which hung in the shadows, and hastened through the rear hatchway and down into the depths of the boat. Then, long after midnight, the last farewell being said by the dizzy officials, and the echoes of *Adios, adios, amigos!* lingering among its tall spars, the *Cossack* slipped noiselessly out of the Boca Chica, and set its course for New York.

A few hours later, while the boat sped swiftly through the phosphorescent waves, the escaped prisoner, José de Rincón, who had lain for a week hidden in the bowels of old fort San Felipe, stood alone in the wonderful smoking room of the *Cos-*

sack, and looked up at the sweet face pictured in the stained-glass window above. And then he turned quickly, for the door opened and a girl entered. A rush, a cry of joy, and his arms closed about the fair vision that had sat by his side constantly during the four long years of his imprisonment.

"Carmen!"

"My José!"

"I have solved my problem! I have proved God! I have found the Christ!"

"I knew you would, for he was with you always!"

"But—oh, you beautiful, beautiful girl!"

Then in a little while she gently released herself and went to the door through which she had entered. She paused for a moment to smile back at the enraptured man, then turned and flung the door wide.

A woman entered, leading a young boy. The man uttered a loud exclamation and started toward her.

"Ana!"

He stopped short and stared down at the boy. Then he looked wonderingly at Carmen.

"Yes," she said, stooping and lifting the boy up before José, "it is Anita's babe—*and he sees!*"

The man clasped the child in his arms and buried his face in its hair.

Verily, upon them that sat in darkness had the Light shined.

CHAPTER 21

ANOTHER summer had come and gone. Through the trees in Central Park the afternoon sunlight, sifted and softened by the tinted autumn leaves, spread over the brown turf like a gossamer web. And it fell like a gentle benediction upon the massive figure of a man, walking unsteadily beneath the trees, holding the hand of a young girl whose beauty made every passer turn and look again.

"Now, father," laughed the girl, "once more! There! Why, you step off like a major!"

They were familiar figures, out there in the park, for almost daily during the past few weeks they might have been seen, as the girl laughingly said, "practicing their steps." And daily the man's control became firmer; daily that limp left arm and leg seemed increasingly to manifest life.

On a bench near by sat a dark-featured woman. About her played her boy, filling the air with his merry shouts and his imperfect English.

"There, father, comes José after us," announced the girl, looking off with love-lit eyes at an approaching automobile. "And Lewis is with him. Now, mind, you are going to get into the car without any help!"

The man laughed, and declared vehemently that if he could not get in alone he would walk home. A few minutes later they had gone.

The profound depth of those changes which had come into the rich man's life, he himself might not fathom. But those who toiled daily with him over his great ledgers and files knew that the transformation went far. There were flashes at times of his former vigor and spirit of domination, but there were also periods of grief that were heart-rending to behold, as when, poring over his records for the name of one whom in years past he had ruthlessly wrecked, he would find that the victim had gone in poverty beyond his power to reimburse him. And again, when his thought dwelt on Avon, and the carnal madness which had filled those new graves there, he would sink moaning into his chair and bury his drawn face in his hands and sob.

And yet he strove madly, feverishly, to restore again to those from whom he had taken. The Simití company was revived, through his labors, and the great La Libertad restored to its reanimated stockholders. Work of development had begun on the property, and Harris was again in Colombia in charge of operations. The Express was booming, and the rich man had consecrated himself to the carrying out of its clean policies. The mills at Avon were running day and night; and in a new location, far from the old-time "lungers' alley," long rows of little cottages were going up for their employes. The lawyer Collins had been removed, and Lewis Waite was to take his place within a week. Father Danny, now recovered, rejoiced in resources such as he had never dared hope to command.

And so the rich man toiled—ah, God! if he had only known before that in the happiness of others lay his own. If only he could have known that but a moiety of his vast, unused income would have let floods of sunshine into the lives of those dwarfed, stunted children who toiled for him, and never played! Oh, if when he closed his mills in the dull months he had but sent them and their tired mothers to the country fields, how they would have risen up and called him blessed! If he could have but known that he was his brother's keeper, and in a sense that the world as yet knows not! For he is indeed wise who loves his fellow-men; and he is a fool who hates them!

The great Fifth Avenue mansion was dark, except where

hung a cluster of glowing bulbs over the rich mahogany table in the library. There about that table sat the little group of searchers after God, with their number augmented now in ways of which they could not have dreamed. And Hitt, great-souled friend of the world, was speaking again as had been his wont in the days now gone.

"The solution of the problems of mankind? Ah, yes, there is a cure-all; there is a final answer to every ethical question, every social, industrial, economic problem, the problems of liquor, poverty, disease, war. And the remedy is so universal that it dissolves even the tangles of tariff and theology. What is it? Ah, my friends, the girl who came among us to 'show the world what love will do' has taught us by her own rich life—it is love. But not the sex-mesmerism, the covetousness, the self-love, which mask behind that heavenly name. For God is Love. And to know Him is to receive that marvelous Christ-principle which unlocks for mankind the door of harmony.

"No, the world's troubles are not the fault of one man, nor of many, but of all who seek happiness in things material, and forget that the real man is the likeness of spirit, and that joy is spiritual. The trusts, and the men of wealth, are not all malefactors; the churches are not wholly filled with evil men. But all, yes all, have 'missed the mark' through the belief that matter and evil are real, and must grope amid sickness, poverty, crime, and death, until they are willing to turn from such false beliefs, and from self, and seek their own in the reflection of Him, who is Love, to their fellow-men. It is only as men join to search for and apply the Christ-principle that they truly unite to solve the world's sore problems and reveal the waiting kingdom of harmony, which is always just at hand. And it can be done. It must be, sometime.

"In that day all shall know that cause and effect are mental. The man who hears the tempter, the carnal mind's suggestion to enrich himself materially at the cost of his brother, will know that it is but the voice of mesmerism, that 'man-killer from the beginning', which bids him sever himself from his God, who alone is infinite abundance. The society woman who flits like a gorgeous butterfly about the courts of fashion, her precious days wasted in motoring, her nights at cards, and whose vitality goes into dress, and into the watery schemes for 'who shall be greatest' in the dismal realm of the human mind, must learn, willingly or through suffering, that her activities are but mesmeric shams that counterfeit the divine activity which manifests in joy and fullness for all.

"Christianity? What is it but the Christ-knowledge, the knowledge of good, and its correlated knowledge, that evil is

only the mesmeric lie which has engulfed the world? But, oh, the depths of that divine knowledge! The knowledge which heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, and opens the prisons to them that are captive! We who are gathered here to-night, feeling in our midst that great, unseen Presence which makes for righteousness, know now that 'in my flesh shall I see God,' for we have indeed already seen and known Him."

With them sat the man who, swept by the storms of error and the carnal winds of destruction, had solved his problem, even as the girl by his side told him he should, and had been found, when his foul prison opened, sitting "clothed and in his right mind" at the feet of the Christ. Jesus "saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit—God—like a dove descending upon him —immediately the Spirit—carnal belief, error, the lie—driveth him into the wilderness." And there he was made to prove God. So José de Rincón, when the light had come, years gone, in desolate Simití, had been bidden to know the one God, and none else. But he wavered when the floods of evil rolled over him; he had looked longingly back; he had clung too tightly to the human concept that walked with him like a shining light in those dark days. And so she had been taken from him, and he had been hurled into the wilderness—alone with Him whom he must learn to know if he would see Life.

Then self-consciousness went out, in those four years of his captivity, and he passed from thence into consciousness of God.

Then his great world-knowledge he saw to have been wholly untrue. His store of truth he saw to have been but relative at best. His knowledge had rested, he then knew, upon viewpoints which had been utterly false. And so, like Paul, he died that he might live. He crucified Self, that he might resurrect the image of God.

"The world," resumed Hitt, "still worships false gods, though it reaches out for Truth. And yet, what are we all seeking? Only a state of consciousness, a consciousness of good, of joy and harmony. And we are seeking to rid ourselves of the consciousness of evil, with its sin, its disease and death. But, knowing now that consciousness is mental activity, the activity of thought, can we not see that harmony and immortality are within our grasp? for they are functions of right thought. Salvation is not from evil realities, but from the false sense of evil, even as Jesus taught and proved. The only salvation possible to mankind is in learning to think as Jesus did—not yielding our mentalities daily to a hodge-podge of mixed thoughts of good and evil, and then running to doctors and preachers when such yielding brings its inevitable result in sickness and death. Jesus insisted that the kingdom of heaven

was within men, a tremendous potentiality within each one of us. How may it be reached? By removing hampering false belief, by removing the limitations of superstition and human opinion which hold its portals closed. True progress is the release of mankind from materialism, with its enslaving drudgery, its woes, and its inevitable death. Mankind's chief difficulty is ignorance of what God is. Jesus proved Him to be mind, spirit. He proved Him to be the creator of the spiritual universe, but not the originator of the lie of materiality. He showed matter to be but the manifestation of the false belief that creation is material. He showed it to be but a sense-impression, without life, without stability, without existence, except the pseudo-existence which it has in the false thought of which the human or carnal consciousness is formed. But the lack of understanding of the real nature of matter, and the persistent belief in the stability of its so-called laws, has resulted in centuries of attempts to discredit the Bible records of his spiritual demonstrations of God's omnipotence and immanence, and so has prevented the human mind from accepting the proofs which it so eagerly sought. And now, after nineteen centuries of so-called Christian teaching, the human mind remains still deeply embedded in matter, and subject to the consentaneous human beliefs which it calls material laws. Jesus showed that it was the communal mortal mind, with its false beliefs in matter, sin, disease, and death, that constituted 'the flesh'; he showed that mortals are begotten of such false beliefs; he showed that the material universe is but manifested human belief. And we know from our own reasoning that we see not things, but our *thoughts* of things; that we deal not with matter, but with material mental concepts only. We know that the preachers have woefully missed the mark, and that the medicines of the doctors have destroyed more lives than wars and famine, and yet will we not learn of the Master? To reach God through material thinking is utterly impossible, for He is spirit, and He can be cognized only by a spiritual consciousness. Yet such a consciousness is ours, if we will but have it.

"Ah, friends, God said: Let US make man in OUR image and likeness—let Life, Love, Spirit make its spiritual reflection. But where is that man to-day? Buried deep beneath the dogma and the crystallized human beliefs of mortals—buried beneath 'the lie' which mankind accept about truth. Nothing but *scientific* religion will meet humanity's dire needs and reveal that man. And scientific religion admits of actual, practical proof. Christianity is as scientific as mathematics, and quite as capable of demonstration. Its proofs lie in doing the works of the

Master. He is a Christian who does these works; he who does not is none. Christianity is not a failure, but organized ecclesiasticism, which always collapses before a world crisis, has failed utterly. The hideous chicane of imperial government and imperial religion against mankind has resulted in a Christian veneer, which cracks at the first test and reveals the unchanged human brute beneath. The nations which writhe in deadly embrace to-day have never sought to prove God. They but emphasize the awful fact that the human mind has no grasp upon the Principle which is God, and at a time of crisis reverts almost instantly to the primitive, despite so-called culture and civilization. Yes, religion as a perpetuation of ancient human conceptions, of materialistic traditions and opinions of 'the Fathers,' is a flat failure. By it the people of great nations have been molded into servile submission to church and ruler—have been persuaded that wretchedness and poverty are eternal—that heaven is a realm beyond the grave, to which admission is a function of outward oblation—and that surcease from ills here, or in the life to come, is a gift of the Church. Can we wonder that commercialism is mistaken by nations for progress? That king and emperor still call upon God to bless their barbaric attempts at conquest? And that human existence remains, what it has always been, a ghastly mockery of Life?

"Healing the sick by applied Christianity is not the attempt to alter a mental concept; it is the bringing out of harmony where before was discord. Evil can not be 'thought away.' He who indulges evil only proves his belief in its reality and power. Christian healing is not 'mental suggestion,' wherein all thought is material. When evil thinking is overcome, then the discords which result from it will disappear from consciousness. That is the Christ-method. Behind all that the physical senses seem to see, know, and feel, is the spiritual fact, perfect and eternal. Jesus healed the sick by establishing this fact in the human consciousness. And we must learn to do likewise. The orthodox churches must learn it. They must cease from the dust-man, whose breath is in his nostrils; they must cease from preaching evil as an awful reality, permitted by God, or existing despite Him; they must know it as Jesus bade all men know it, as the lie about Truth. Then, by holding the divine ideal before the human mind, they will cause that mentality gradually to relinquish its false beliefs and copy the real. And thus, step by step, changing from better to better beliefs, at length the human mind will have completely substituted reality for unreality, and will be no more, even in thought. The 'old man' will have given place to the 'new.' This is the method of

Jesus. There is no other. Yes, for the present we reckon with material symbols; we have not yet fully learned their unreality. But at length, if we are faithful, we shall lay them aside, and know only Truth and its pure manifestations.

"Ah, my friends, how simple is Christianity! It is summed up in the Sermon on the Mount. Our salvation is in righteousness. He who thinks right shall know things as they are. He who thinks wrong shall seem to know them as they are not, and shall pass his days in sore travail, even in wars, famine, and utter misery. Then why not take up the demonstration of Christianity in the spirit of joy and freedom from prejudice with which we pursue our earthly studies, and as gladly, thankfully seek to prove it? For it, of all things, is worth while. It alone is the true business of men. For if what we have developed in our many talks regarding God, man, and the mental nature of the universe and all things is true, then are the things with which men now occupy themselves worth while? No, decidedly no! But are the things which we have developed true? Yes, for they can be and have been demonstrated. Then, indeed, are we without excuse. Carmen has shown us the way. No, she is not unnatural; she is only divinely natural. She has shown us what we all may become, if we but will. She has shown us what we shall be able to do when we are completely lost in accord with God, and recognize no other life, substance, nor law than His. But—

" 'I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil,' cried the prophet. *Truth always has its suppositional opposite!* Choose ye then whom ye will serve. All is subject to proof. Only that which is demonstrably true, not after the change which we call death, but here this side of the grave, can stand. The only test of a Christian is in the 'signs following.' Without them his faith is but sterile human belief, and his god but the distorted human concept whom kings beseech to bless their slaughter.

" 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

" 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

" 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

" 'Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' "

The fire crackled briskly on the great hearth. Carmen rose and turned off the light above them. All drew their chairs about the cheery blaze.

Silence, sacred, holy, lay upon them. The rich man, now

possessing treasures beyond his wildest dreams, sat holding his daughter's hand. Her other hand lay in José's. Sidney had just entered; and Haynerd had sent word that he would join them soon.

Then the silence was broken by the rich man. His voice was unsteady and low.

"My friends, sorrow and joy fill my heart to-night. To the first I am resigned; it is my due; and yet, were it greater, I know not how I could live. But the joy—who can understand it until he has passed through death into life! This little girl's mother knew not, nor did I, that she was royal born. Sometimes I wonder now if it is really so. And yet the evidence is such that I can scarcely doubt. We met in the sun-kissed hills of Granada; and we loved. Her old nurse was Argus-eyed; and our meetings were such as only lovers can effect. I was young, wild, and my blood coursed like a torrent through my veins! But I loved her, yes, base though I was, I loved her. And in these years since I left her in that little house in Bogotá, I have suffered the agonies of the lost when her memory and my own iniquity fell upon me and smote me sore—

"We were married in Spain, and the marriage was performed by Padre Rafaél de Rincón."

"My uncle!" cried the startled José.

"And then we fled," continued Ames. "I was rich; I was roaming the world, extending my vast business interests; and I took her to Colombia, where I labored with the politicians in Bogotá to grant me timber and cattle concessions. We had a cottage on the outskirts of the city, where we were happy. With us lived her faithful old nurse, whom she would not leave in Spain—

"Then, one day, came a cable message that my father had died. The news transformed me. I knew I must return at once to New York. But—I would not take a wife back with me! Why, I know not. I was mad! And I kissed her tear-stained face, and bade her wait, for I would return and make her happy. And then—

"Months later I wrote to her, and, receiving no reply, I caused inquiry to be made. But she had gone—whither, no one knew. The old nurse, too, had disappeared. I never learned that a woman had been left at Badillo to die. And she was not known in Bogotá. She was timid, and went out seldom. And then—then I thought that a marriage here would strengthen my position, for I was powerful and proud.

"Oh, the years that her sad face haunted me! I was mad, mad! I know not why, but when the *Cossack* was built I had her portrait in glass set in the smoking room. And night after

night I have sat before it and cursed myself, and implored her to forgive!"

"But—the locket?" said Father Waite.

"It came from Spain. I was Guillermo to her, and she Dolores to me. But I had never forgotten it. Had Carmen ever worn it in my presence I must have recognized it at once. Oh, God, that she had! What would it not have saved!"

"Father!" The girl's arms were about his neck.

"But," said Ames, choking down his sorrow, "that man is dead. He, like Goliath, fought Truth, and the Truth fell upon him, crushing him to powder. The man who remains with you now lives only in this little girl. And she has brought me my own son, Sidney, and another, José. All that I have is theirs, and they will give it to the world. I would that she could have brought me that noble black man, Rosendo, who laid down his beautiful life when he saw that his work was done. I learn from my inquiries that he and Doña Maria lived with Don Nicolás far up the Boque river during the troublous times when Simití was burned and devastated. And that, when the troops had gone, they returned to their desolated home, and died within a month of each other. What do I not owe to them! And can my care of their daughter Ana and her little son ever cancel the debt? Alas, no!"

Sidney turned to the man. "Father, does José know that it was Kathleen whom he rescued from the Tiber in Rome, years ago, and who caused him to lose his notebook?"

Another exclamation burst from José. Ames shook his head. "No, Sidney, we had not told him. Ah, how small is the world! And how inextricably bound together we all are! And, José, I have not told you that the woman who lived and died alone in the limestone caves near Honda, and whose story you had from Don Jorge in Simití, was doubtless the faithful old nurse of Dolores. My investigations all but confirm it. Padre Rafaél de Rincón maintained her there."

Haynerd entered the room at that moment, and with him came Miss Wall.

"Now," said Hitt softly, "the circle is complete. Carmen, may I—"

The girl rose at once and went into the music room. Those who remained sat in awed, expectant silence. Another presence stole softly in, but they saw him not. Soon through the great rooms and marble halls drifted the low, weird melody which the girl had sung, long before, in the dreary Elwin school.

In the flickering light of the fire strange shapes took form; and the shadows that danced on the walls silhouetted scenes from the dimming past. From out their weird imagery rose a

single form. Into it passed the unseen presence. Slowly it rose before them from out the shadows. It was black of face, but its wondrous heart which had cradled the nameless babe of Badillo glistened like drifting snow.

The last sweet notes of the plaintive Indian lament fluttered from the girl's lips, echoed among the marble pillars, and died away down the distant corridors. She returned and bent over her father with a tender caress.

Then the great black man in the shadows extended his arms for a moment above them, and faded from their sight. There was the sound of low weeping in the room. For

"these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

GLOSSARY

á buen precio, for a good price.
adiós, good-bye.
adioscito, good-bye (used among intimates).
alcalde, mayor, chief of village.
algarroba, the carob-tree bean.
alpargates, hempen sandals.
americano, American.
amigo, amiga, friend.
anisado, liquor made from anise-seed.
á propósito, by-the-bye, apropo.
A *arena,* bull ring, circle where bull-fights are held.
arepa, corn cake baked in ashes.
arma blanca, steel arms, generally the *machete.*
arrastra, or *arrastre,* a mining mill.
arreglo, arrangement.
arriba, above.
arroyo, ditch, small stream, creek.
asequia, gutter, conduit for water.
auto da fé, public punishment by the Holy Inquisition.
avispas, wasps.
ay de mí, ah me! woe is me! alas!
bagre, fish from Lake Simití, dried and salted.
baile, dance.
barra, bar of wood or iron.
batea, a wooden basin corresponding to the gold-pan.
bejuco, thin filament, growing on tropical trees. Also, vine.
bendita virgen, Blessed Virgin.
B *bien,* well.
bien pues, well, then.
billetes, bank notes, government notes, paper money.
bodega, warehouse. Also, depot, supply house, cellar.
boga, boatman, rower.
bóveda, vault, or arched enclosure. Burial vault, tomb.
bueno, good.
buen padre, good father.
cabildo, corporation of a town, town council.
calentura, fever.
camino real, royal road, highway.
canasto, large basket, waste-basket.
cantina, saloon, public drinking place.
caño, canal.
caoba, mahogany tree or wood.
capilla mayor, high altar, principal chapel.
capitán, captain.
caramba, an interjection of no particular meaning.
cárcel, jail.
cargadores, human pack-carriers, porters.
carísima, dearest little girl.
carita, dear little girl.

caro amigo, dear friend.
catalina, Katharine.
cayman, crocodile.
champán, a native thatch-roofed river boat.
chiquita mía, my dearest little girl.
chiquito-a, dearest little one.
cielo, heaven.
ciénaga, a marsh or moor. Sometimes lake.
cierto, certain, sure, surely, certainly.
cochero, coachman, driver.
cola, a tropical non-alcoholic drink.
C *cólera,* cholera.
colibrí, humming bird.
comadre, friend, when used casually addressing a woman.
comjejen, white wood-eating ant.
compadre, friend, when used casually addressing a man.
conque, adios, "well, good-bye."
conque, hasta luego, "well, good-bye until we meet again."
conqueros, conquerors.
conquistadores, conquerors.
cordilleras, chain or ridge of mountains.
corriente, right, correct.
costumbre del país, national custom.
cura, priest.
de nada, don't mention it.
desayuno, breakfast.
día, day.
diablo, devil.
D *dios arriba,* God above!
dios mio, my God!
dios nos guarde, God preserve us!
dios y diablo, God and devil!
dique, canal, channel.
doncella, young woman.
el, the (masculine).
enamorada, infatuated one (female).
E *en manos muertas,* "in dead hands."
escapulario, scapulary.
escritorio, writing desk.
feria, fair, festival.
F *fiasco,* failure.
finca, farm.
flor, flower (pl. *flores*).
garrafón, jug.
garrapata, wood-tick.
G *garza,* heron.
gracias, thanks, thank you.
guaquero, hunter of Indian graves.
guerrillas, band of guerrillas.
hacienda, farm.

hada, witch.
hermano, brother.
hermoso, beautiful.
H *hermosísimo-a,* most beautiful.
hidalgo, nobleman.
hola! halloo!
hombre, man.
hostia, sacred wafer used in the mass.
I *iguana,* large edible lizard.
infanta, Spanish princess.
jejen, gnat.
J *jipijapa,* very fine woven straw, used in Panamá hats.
jipitera, child's disease, due to eating dirt.
la, the (feminine).
lianas, vines.
L *llanos,* flat plains.
loado sea el buen dios, praised be the good God!
loco, crazy, mad.
macana, a very hard, tough palm, used in hut construction.
machete, cane-knife, large knife used for trail-cutting.
machetero, trail-cutter.
madre de dios, mother of God.
maestro, master.
maldito, cursed, cursed one.
mantilla, head-scarf of lace.
mariposa, butterfly.
M *matador,* bull-fighter who slays the bull with the sword.
médico, doctor.
mestizo, half-breed.
milagro, miracle. Also, small gold image, blessed by a priest, and supposed to work a cure.
mora, bramble-bush.
mozo, waiter, servant, also young boy or man.
muchacho, boy.
muy bien, very well.
muy buenos dias, "good morning."
na, an expression of disagreement, disavowal, or demurral.
N *nada,* nothing.
nada más, nothing more.
nombre de dios, name of God.
ojalá, "would to God!" "God grant!"
O *olla,* pot, or kettle. Also, a stew of meat and vegetables.
oporto, port wine.
padre, father, Father, priest.
panela, the crude sugar of tropical America.
pantano, swamp.
pater-noster, the Lord's prayer.
patio, the interior court of a dwelling, yard, garden.
patrón (naut.), cockswain of a boat.
peón, day-laborer.

peso, dollar.
peso oro, a dollar in gold.
peso y medio, a dollar and a half.
petate, straw mat on which the poor people sleep.
plaga, plague, pestilence.
plátano, plantain tree, or its fruit.
playa, shore, beach, strand.
P *policía,* police.
por, for, by.
por dios, by God!
por el amor del cielo, for the love of heaven!
por supuesto, of course.
posada, inn, hotel, restaurant.
pozo, well, pond, puddle.
pronto, soon, quickly.
pueblo, town, settlement, people.
quebrada, creek, small stream.
qué chiste, what a joke!
qué importa, what does it matter?
Q *quemador,* public square where heretics were burned.
queridito-a, dear little one.
quién sabe, who knows?
real (reales), a silver coin, valued at 5, 10, or 12½ cents.
religion de dinero, a religion of money.
R *ruana,* a cape worn by the poor males of tropical America.
rurales, country people, peasants, farmers.
sacristía, sacristy.
san benito, the garb worn by condemned heretics.
santa maría, Saint Mary.
santa virgen, the sainted Virgin.
santo dios, the blessed God!
selva, forest.
S *seminario,* seminary.
señora, Madam, Mrs., a mature woman, a married woman.
señorita, Miss, a young unmarried woman.
sepulcros, tombs, graves.
sierras, mountain chain.
siesta, the midday hour of rest, the hottest part of the day.
sobrinito, little nephew.
temprano, early.
terciana, intermittent fever.
tía, aunt.
tierra caliente, hot lands.
T *tío mío,* my uncle.
tiple, a small guitar.
toldo, awning, the mosquito netting hung over beds.
trago, tragito, a drink, a draught.
tumba, tomb, grave.
ya está, vámonos, all ready, let's go!
Y *yucca,* or *yuca,* the yucca plant or its roots.

MAESTRO BOOKS

BY

CHARLES FRANCIS STOCKING

HERE

THOU ISRAEL

CARMEN ARIZA

MODERN PARABLES

THE MAYOR OF FILBERT

THE DIARY OF JEAN EVARTS

THE IDENTITY OF DOUGLAS BAIN

THE BUSINESS MAN OF SYRIA *(In collaboration with W. W. Totheroh)*

DONE INTO A BOOK FOR THE MAESTRO COMPANY BY W. B. CONKEY COMPANY, CHICAGO